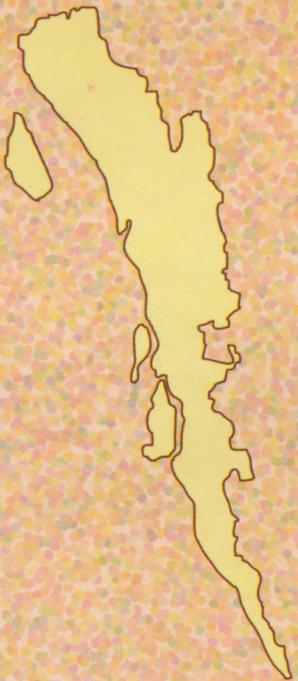


# **A HISTORY OF CHITTAGONG**

## **Vol. II**



**SUNITI BHUSHAN QANUNGO**

**A HISTORY OF CHITTAGONG  
VOLUME TWO**

By the same author :

*A History of Chittagong, Vol. I (From Ancient Times down to 1761)*

*The Chittagong Revolt, 1930 - 34*

*Chakma Resistance to British Domination*

**A HISTORY OF CHITTAGONG**  
**VOLUME TWO**  
**(1761 - 1947)**

**SUNITI BHUSHAN QANUNGO**  
M. A. Ph. D.

KANUNGOPARA  
**CHITTAGONG**

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**TO  
MY PARENTS**

*pita swargah pita dharmah pitahi paramam tapah  
pitari pritimapanne priyante swarbadevatah.  
jananijanmabhumi scha swargadapi garhiyasi.*

## PREFACE

The present book is the continuation of my published work A History of Chittagong, volume one which deals with ancient and medieval periods. The present work deals with the modern period of the history of Chittagong. Thus the two volumes jointly cover the ancient, medieval and modern periods of the history of Chittagong.

During the latter part of the British rule people of Chittagong became very much conscious of local history. A number of native writers wrote many books connected with the history of particular area. Most of these works are not available at the present time. The government reports, contemporary newspapers, statistical accounts, district gazetteers, census reports, travellers' accounts and other written documents are useful sources of information regarding the history of Chittagong under British rule. These sources have been utilized in writing the book.

From the very beginning the British rulers conducted experiments in administration in order to plan, organize and run the statecraft. Throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, the successive experiments have failed to evolve an acceptable system of government. It was found difficult to carry on day to day administration of the province and to replace the Mughal administration. In fact, the British administration was an amalgamation of British and Indian system of administration. By the Cornwallis code the magistrate collector was given sole authority to organize the public affairs. Chapter four deals with the evolution of administration in the district.

Four major communities, namely the Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians are living together in Chittagong from the medieval period. Each

community practise their own religion and follow their own ways of living. However, there are many objects which are common to all communities. In the events of the Independence movement and political activities they were closely connected with one other. The British period witnessed religious reforms and social changes. These subjects are briefly discussed in chapter five.

The British period witnessed the growth of Chittagong town and the development of urban life. The town of Chittagong was the administrative, financial and business centre of the district. Though the town of Chittagong is thousand years old the British city of Chittagong was created in 1860s. It has undergone gradual growth since that time.

The latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century witnessed the introduction of modern ideas in social life, social welfare activities, cultivation of arts and literature, transport system, economic system and other things. The elite section of the society played a leading role in the modernization of the society. In fact, the British period brought Chittagong to the door of modern age.

Writing of this book was completed about a decade ago. In the following years the author was under pressure to publish the book. But due to some unavoidable circumstances the book could not be published at an earlier period of time. It is hoped that the author will be excused for the delay.

I am very much grateful to all those who have helped me in producing this book. I should like to thank my students, colleagues and acquaintances whose encouragement was always an inspiration to me.

Mahalaya  
Kanungopara, 1417 B E

Suniti Bhushan Qanungo

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## Chapter 1

### Land and People

Name. Chittagong, in ancient times, was known as Chattagram, which was changed into Chatgaon during the sultanate period. The Mughals commemorated their conquest of Chittagong in 1666 by renaming it Islamabad or the land of peace. The name Islamabad continued till the end of the East India Company's rule. Chittagong, the anglicised form of Chatgaon became the most common name during the subsequent British rule.

Boundary. Just after the cession of the district to the East India Company, the boundary of the district was demarcated as follows :

The province of Chittagong extends to the southward of the capital (Islamabad) about fifty miles to a river called Cruzcolly (Khuruskhali). To the westward from the said river is a ridge of mountains that stretch to the S. E. and E, and divide the Chittagong district from the kingdom of Arakan; to the N. E. and N the mountains still continue, and divide the province from that of Tipperah; to the N. N. W. and N. W. it is bounded by a river called the Burrah Fenny.<sup>1</sup>

Since then, the boundary of the district has undergone changes from time to time. In 1761, the conquered territory of the plains Tippera was incorporated into Chittagong and it remained as such till the formation of the separate district of Tippera in 1789.<sup>2</sup> In the early years of 1770s, a large part of the subjugated area of Chittagong Hill Tracts was united with the district. In 1785, the island of Sandwip was joined to Chittagong.<sup>3</sup> Hatia and southern Noakhali constituted a part of Chittagong till the formation of the district of Noakhali in 1822. Sandwip was transferred to the Noakhali District. The judicial

branch of administration of Sandwip was, however, kept reserved under the civil courts of Chittagong.<sup>4</sup> The revenue of Sandwip was controlled by the Chittagong collectorate till 1877. In 1881-82, river Feni marks the boundary line between Chittagong and Noakhali. In 1956, Sandwip was reincorporated into Chittagong District.

After the British occupation of Burma in 1826 the province of Arakan was incorporated into Chittagong. In 1881, it was separated from Chittagong to form a part of Burma. River Naaf marks the boundary between Arakan and Chittagong.

In 1860, the non-regulation district of Chittagong Hill Tracts was changed into the district of Chittagong Hill Tracts, the boundary of which, was not clearly defined till 1880.<sup>5</sup>

**Area.** The area of the district was subjected to time changes. According to W W Hunter, the area of the district at the time of the cession in 1760 was 2987 sq. miles.<sup>6</sup> The census report of 1891 measured the area of the district 2563 sq. miles. At the time of Lt. Siddon's survey in 1837-41, the area of the district was 2717 sq. miles.<sup>7</sup> According to Allen's report, the area of Chittagong District in 1898 was 2492 sq. miles. The cause of the variation in area obviously was due to the addition and subtraction of pieces of land. Since that time the area of the district has not undergone any major changes.

**Physical environment.** The physical environment of the district concerns chiefly with the aspects of the geological structure which is arranged as follows.

**Soil.** The type of soil is distinguished by texture. Three types of soil can be found in the district. (a) Loose soil can be found in the hill slopes, in the char lands and on the banks of the rivers and streamlets; (b) clayey soil is found chiefly in the marshy areas between the hill ranges; (c) alluvial soil consists of clay and sand, deposited by running waters of rivers and streams.

**Hill ranges.** Three hill ranges, broken by valleys and

marshy tracts characterize the topography of the district. The Sitakunda Mirsarai hill range spread farther south upto Mahesh khali. This hill range south of the Sankha is mentioned in Buchanan Hamilton's narratives as Churamani hills.<sup>8</sup> The Rangunia hills extends farther south. The part of the range from the south of the Karnafuli upto Garjania is mentioned Muin Pahar (Muni Pahar) in Buchanan's narratives.<sup>9</sup> Parts of this hill range are differently named Ram Pahar and Sita Pahar.<sup>10</sup> The eastern most hill range marks the border between Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Hills of Chittagong are mostly sandy. Large blocks of hard stone detached from earth's crust can be seen in Sitakunda. Soft stone can be seen some few feet under sandy surface of the hilly region. Small hills and mounds can be seen everywhere in the district.

Some of the hilly areas are well known for their scenic beauty. The natural scenery of the district arouses admiration of walkers and tourists alike.

**Rivers.** Heavy rainfall brought about a large number of rivers and streams of various sizes. Except the river Karnafuli no other river is deep enough to provide passage for vessels. On account of the situation of sandy hill in the catchment areas, silt is deposited on the bottom of the rivers and streams. The hill streams are very much helpful for watering of land and carrying of hill products downstream. Rivers and streams help creation of plains land everywhere in the district.

**Ocean.** Chittagong has a long strip of land that borders the sea. The coast furnishes water communication, harbour facilities and seaside resorts. It has much economic value. Salt is manufactured everywhere in the coastal areas. Fisheries grow up in parts of the coastal area where the business of catching fish thrives.

**Vegetation.** The vegetation of Chittagong is chiefly of two types, crop crop plantations and forests. Agricultural fields

can be seen everywhere in the plainsland. Forests are found chiefly in the hilly areas. The forests of Chittagong are characterized by luxuriant natural growth of trees and creepers. Bamboos of various species are planted throughout the district.

Climate. Due to the contiguity of ocean, summers are on the whole cooler and winters are milder than that of other parts of the country. Monsoon winds during the months of June to September blow from sea across the district. As a result, rainfall is heavy during the monsoon months.

Throughout the British period, Chittagong was much resorted to by the Europeans. Hamilton writes, "This maritime tract is much resorted to by the European inhabitants of Bengal, on account of the beneficial effects experienced from the sea air, and the salt water bathing."<sup>11</sup> Referring to the healthy climate of Chittagong W W Hunter writes,

At the end of the last and the beginning of the present century, Chittagong was considered a sanatorium ... In former years Chittagong was resorted to for its cool sea-breeze, and because Calcutta was then more unhealthy, and when a change of air was desired, there were few places more attractive within easy reach.<sup>12</sup>

Population. The inhabitants of Chittagong constituted of two main groups, the Bengalees living primarily in the plainsland and the tribesmen living primarily in the hilly region.

According to 1801 khanasumari census report, the total number of inhabitants of the district was 12,00,000.<sup>13</sup> In 1868-69 the population of the district was 8,00,000.<sup>14</sup> The decrease in number of the population was due to creation of two separate districts of Noakhali and Chittagong Hill Tracts. The census reports give the number of population as follows :

1872 ... ... 11,27,402

1891 ... ... 12,90,167

1901 ... ... 13,53,125

1931 ... ... 17,97,034

A study of the census reports from 1872 to 1931 reveals that the growth of population was slow. The natality and the mortality both were high in the district during that time.

**Population movement.** Throughout the British period, population movements from one place to another did occur. There has been a movement of people from central Chittagong to southern Chittagong. People of the plains moved to Chittagong Hill Tracts especially to Rangunia to establish more or less permanent residence. During the Burmese invasion in Arakan there was a mass migration of the Arakanese (called Rakhaing) to southern Chittagong. After the Burmese war, a number of people left Chittagong to settle in Burma especially in the Akyab district.

During the latter part of the 1940s, large number of people migrated from rural areas to urban areas in search of jobs.

**Ethnic groups.** For centuries, a number of ethnic groups are living in Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts districts. Dr. Francis Buchanan Hamilton, while visiting Chittagong in 1790s, gives a brief but valuable description of customs, language and religious beliefs of a number of tribes living in particular areas of Chittagong and the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The tribesmen ethnically belong to the mongoloid group of human race.

The Chakmas are some of the earliest inhabitants of Chittagong. The earliest reference to these people is found in De Barros' map (1550s). At the time of the acquisition of diwani by the East India Company, the territory of the Chakma Raja extended as far west as the Mirsarai Sitakunda hills and Rangunia valley. The second capital of the Chakma Raja was Rajanagar in Rangunia.

Buchanan's narratives refer to the Tripura settlement in Mirsarai - Sitakunda hill range.<sup>15</sup>

The Marmas (popularly called the Maghs) are ethnically connected with the Burmese. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton writes that the Marmas under the leadership of Bohmang Konglafru entered Chittagong from Burma and settled in the valleys of the Sangu (the Sankha) and the Matamuhuri in the middle of the eighteenth century. Konglafru became the chief of the Marmas and the dynasty founded by him is known as Bohmang dynasty. The Marmas are related to the Burmese in language, religion and custom.

The Rakhaings are the most numerous section of the tribesmen living in Chittagong. They left their original country Arakan in the latter half of the eighteenth century to settle in the British territory of southern Chittagong. Mr. Bateman, the collector of Chittagong, "reported on the 17th November, 1775 that 2000 people had fled from Arracan and settled in the district, and that he had given them pottahs for new lands."<sup>16</sup> According to Buchanan Hamilton, the whole area between Chandpur and Baratulla (Baraitali) are inhabited by the immigrants from Rosang (Arakan).<sup>17</sup> The largest concentration of the Rakhaings was in and around Ramu. Buchanan writes in 1798 that "in the whole of this valley there are fifteen thousand Rakain, who have fled hither since the conquest of their country."<sup>18</sup> Between the years 1797 and 1800, it is said "about 30,000 or 40,000 persons emigrated from Arakan to Chittagong District".<sup>19</sup>

#### Note :

- 1 Verelst's letter to Vansittart, 16th Feb., 1761
- 2 H J S Cotton, *Memorandum on the Revenue History of Chittagong*, p. 5
- 3 W W Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, VI, 117
- 4 L S S O'Malley, *Eastern Bengal and Assam. District Gazetteers, Chittagong*
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 125
- 7 *Census Report, 1872*, p. 109

- 8 Dr. Francis Buchanan Hamilton, *Buchanan in South East Bengal (1798)*, p. 24
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 25
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 26
- 11 Walter Hamilton, *A Geographical, Statistical and Historical Descriptions of Hindustan*, I, 169
- 12 Hunter, *op. cit.*, VI, 228
- 13 *Hamilton's Hindustan*, I, 169
- 14 Hunter, *op. cit.*, VI, 133
- 15 *Buchanan*, p. 15
- 16 *Memorandum*, p. 83
- 17 *Buchanan*, p. 31
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 50
- 19 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 118

## Chapter 2

# Establishment of an Authoritarian Government

### A. Chittagong under the East India Company's rule (1761-1858)

By a secret treaty between the English East India Company and Nawab Mir Kasim on September 27, 1760, the former gained the diwani of Chittagong.<sup>1</sup> The grant of diwani, embodied in the secret treaty, was officially confirmed on October 15, 1760.<sup>2</sup>

In reality, a mere acquisition of diwani did not satisfy the English. They proceeded to take firm hold of the district's administration. In December, 1760, the council at Fort William appointed Harry Verelst 'Chief' of Chittagong and asked him to take over charges of the district from the faujdar. A council consisting of two members was also appointed to advise the chief in official functions.

On January 5, 1761 Verelst took charges of the administration from Muhammad Reza Khan, the last Mughal faujdar of Chittagong, who personally accompanied Mr. Verelst in December, 1760.<sup>3</sup> Nawab Reza Khan never returned to Chittagong as his powers and functions had been captured by the English. The appointment of 'Chief' virtually put an end to the faujdarship in the district. The company authorities brought the garrisoning Mughal army in Chittagong under their control. The faujdar's court was replaced by a council consisting of European members. The administration of the district was brought under direct supervision of the Calcutta authorities.

The diwani grant of Chittagong was renewed by Nawab Mir Zafar on July 6, 1763.

Taking privilege of the diwani, the East India Company step by step assumed monopoly of inland trade. By the establishment of the Board of Trade in 1774 the English acquired full authority over inland trade.

The company's rule in Bengal gained great significance by enactment of the Regulating Act of 1773. This Act provided for parliamentary supervision over the company's administration in India.

The East India Company began to make revenue managements in its own way. In 1776 the khasmahal settlement was introduced in some parts of the district. It was made more extensive in 1783. By this arrangement the British government became the direct owner of the cultivable land.

The reforms of Lord Cornwallis further consolidated the British power in Bengal. By the Permanent Settlement a subservient landlord class was created. Executive power of the district's ruler was strengthened by the concentration of judicial functions in his hand. Thanas were created to make sure that the laws were obeyed without question. During the Independence movement a strong police force was created to crush all sorts of agitation against government.

The British rulers took severe measures against any person who refused to do what the law tells him to do. The Bengal Regulation III of 1818 authorized the British government to put under detention for an indefinite period any person who might be suspected of committing or contemplating to commit any act injurious to the safety of the British government in India.

The suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny brought the whole of the Mughal territory under the sway of one supreme military power-the British.

## B. Chittagong under the British Crown (1858-1947)

On November 1, 1858 by a proclamation, Queen Victoria took over the administration of India to her own hand and put

an end to the company's rule over India. By this proclamation the British monarch became the sovereign ruler over India. In 1877, Queen of England became the Empress of India. The post of the Governor General was abolished and in his place the post of the Viceroy of the Emperor or Empress of India was created. The legitimacy of the British rulers must be acknowledged by the Indian subjects.

The relations between the British ruler and the Indians were those of superiors and subordinates. High status was accorded to the Europeans. Indians were reduced to permanently inferior position. British rulers attempted to make the people of India understand that they were backward people and had no ability required for conducting administration efficiently.

Authority is related to power. The British authorities claimed that they had the right to issue commands and the people must follow the directions of the authorities. Every legislation invested the British rulers with greater power over their subject people.

By the Indian Penal Code, 1860, the controlling power of the government took a definite shape. By this code whoever collects men, arms or otherwise in order to wage war against the government shall suffer maximum penalty.

The British born subjects were exempt from the jurisdictions of native courts. The mischievous activities of the Europeans could not be tried in an Indian court. The native judges were forbidden to take cognizance of any suit in which an European British subject happened to be a party. The judicial privilege gave the Europeans to act in an arbitrary manner.

Individual freedom was not recognised under authoritarian government. The rights to free speech, writing and political organizations were denied to the people. It was expected that the Indian people should obey authority and rules even when these were unfair.

As the Indians were the subject people under the British sovereign, so the British executives would exercise full control

not only over the political affairs but also over the economy, education and civil service.

The Vernacular Press Act (1878) clearly and firmly states that one cannot write or speak anything that is critical of the government. Newspapermen and writers had to write under threat of interference by the government. By the Indian Act (1910) publication of materials what were thought to be provoking against government were forbidden.

By the Rowlatt Act (1919), any assemblage to demonstrate political agitation and to take part in protest meetings and processions were prohibited.

The British rulers established, in fact, a colonial rule in India. Colonialism means "a policy by which a nation maintains or extends its control over foreign dependencies." The colonial country does exist for the benefit of the ruling country. The British colonial rule in India was controlled by the British army.

The British rulers employed all possible devices to change trade and commerce to their own advantage. In fact, India became a market for British goods and capital investment.

The educational system was utilized to create bureaucrats. Indigenous ship building industry was discouraged. Ocean, coastal and river transport systems were directed by the British companies. Manufacture of salt was prohibited by law in 1833 and again in 1898. Government assumed the monopoly of trade in salt. Cotton textile industry was discouraged.

The British government in these ways brought the trade and commerce under its complete control. The British government demanded servile obedience from the Indian subjects. The Indians were forced to obey all kinds of rules and regulations without question.

#### **Note :**

- 1 Aitchison, *Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, Vol. 1
- 2 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 115
- 3 *Memorandum*, p. 7

## Chapter 3

### Relation with Burma

Chittagong is situated adjacent to Burma. There has been a political and social connection between these two countries since time immemorial. From 1576 to 1666 Chittagong was under the rule of the Arakanese kingdom. In 1666 A. D. the Mughals under Nawab Shaista Khan gained mastery over Chittagong by driving the Arakanese out of the district.

By a systematic conquest the Mughal territory of Chittagong extended as far south as Ramu, where a Mughal outpost was erected. The British as successors to the Mughals claim authority over the whole of the area as far south as the right bank of the river Naaf.

Harry Verelst, the 'Chief' of Chittagong after taking charge of the district wrote a letter to the king of Arakan assuring him of the company's friendship. The king of Arakan, in reply, sent a deputation to Verelst as a gesture of friendship and goodwill.<sup>1</sup>

The Burmese occupation of Arakan in 1786 made the whole thing different. It gave birth to the Arakanese resistance against the Burmese occupation forces. A large number of resistance fighters took shelter in the border areas of southern Chittagong.

In 1786, a body of Burmese troops crossed the Naaf with the intent to capture or kill a Magh sardar who was then staying in the British territory. The Burmese crossing of the Naaf gave the British authorities of Chittagong signal to prepare for military action. Major Ellerker, a senior army officer was sent with some troops to protect the frontier. No hostile step, however, was taken by Major Ellerker.<sup>2</sup>

To rebuff any possible Burmese inroad into Chittagong,

the British authorities strengthened military build-up at Ramu. Thanas or police outposts were established in Chakaria, Teknaaf and Nhila chiefly for watching the enemy's movements.

One of the leaders of Arakanese resistance forces named Lahwa Murang, brother of the defeated 'Rajah of Rushum' (Roshang or Arakan) took shelter in the jungly areas on the right bank of the river Naaf.

In reply to a petition from Lahwa Murang, asking the British authorities to grant land for the settlement of his followers in the border areas, the British authorities granted him the land asked for. The limits of the granted land are stated as follows.

Your petitioner prays that a pottah and perwannah for the wastes and churs situate in Teknaaf nuddy, in the province of Islamabad, as per the following boundaries - to the north of the river Naaf; west of the nulla Oocheea and the aforesaid river; east of the sea; and south of the nullah Razoo, be granted him by Government to the end that he may encourage ryots who have not other interests to resort thither from Arracan..."<sup>3</sup>

This petition was entered into the diary on the 21st October, 1790. In course of time, a large number of the Arakanese refugees came to live in this extensive region which has been known as Palong since then.

In 1793, three insurgent leaders who being defeated in one of their hostile enterprises fled as usual to the company's territory of Chittagong.<sup>4</sup>

A Magh sardar named Apelung along with a group of insurgents took shelter in the British territory.

The Arakanese rebels harried the Burmese occupation forces by conducting sporadic attacks on them. "The Burmese court suspected that in these raids the fugitives were abetted by the British authorities."<sup>5</sup>

In January, 1794, a large body of Burmese troops crossed the Naaf and demanded for the surrender of all rebels including Lahwa Murang, the leader of the Arakanese insurgents.

The presence of the Burmese forces in the Palong areas frightened the Arakanese settlers. They fled from their granted lands to safe places in the further north.

Dr. Buchanan Hamilton, while travelling in the affected areas found several Palongs, "deserted in the year 1794 on the incursions of the Burmans and which ever since have continued almost without inhabitants."<sup>6</sup> Dr. Buchanan further writes, "Before the Burman incursion they (the twelve palongs) were thickly inhabited and well cultivated."<sup>7</sup>

In reply to Buchanan's enquiry about their return to former settlements, "the inhabitants both Rakain and Bengalese say that they would not venture to go to the Pallungs from the want of a military force sufficient to protect them from the Burmans."<sup>8</sup>

To check the Burmese design of hostile intrusion into the company's territory the British authorities adopted both diplomatic and military means.

On Feb. 18, 1794, magistrate Colebrooke sent letters to the governor of Arakan and to the governor of Ramree separately requesting them to withdraw their forces from the occupied region.<sup>9</sup> In his reply, the governor of Ramree repeated the charges against Apalong and "clearly stated that the Burmese army would not retreat beyond the British frontier without arresting Apolung."<sup>10</sup>

Captain Rayne, the officer in charge of British troops at Chittagong was sent to beat back the Burmese intruders. He started marching to reach Ramu. He moved upto Ratnapalong and reported that a stronger force would be needed 'to do anything effectual against them.' Accordingly, Lieutenants Watherstone and Hunt with artillery and a company of sepoys were dispatched to strengthen the military base at Ramu. In

1794, the garrisoning sepoys at Ramu were commanded by Mr. Braigham.<sup>11</sup>

In 1796 Captain Hiram Cox was appointed resident at Rangoon.<sup>12</sup> He was directed to conduct negotiations with the Burmese authorities so as to arrive at a satisfactory solution. It seems that his diplomatic efforts failed to gain any concrete result.

A section of the British officials at Chittagong were unwilling to be involved in hostility with the Burmese. Mr. Pierard, the collector of Chittagong (1795-1799) writes,

(the area connected with the conflict) is a vast space of country almost wholly waste lying between the village of Burrapalang and the Naaf River which has been considered for some years to form part of the Company's territory, though it does not appear to have been regarded in that light in earlier times, nor to have been included in major Rennel's delineation of this province.<sup>13</sup>

Buchanan Hamilton who was staying in the area at that time, gives a description of the military presence of the Burmese in border areas and the British preparation to checkmate their aggressive design in 1798.

The Burmese force .... consisted of four thousand musketeers. They had fifty small cannon mounted on ship carriages, and each wrought by two men. The musketeers were Burmas. The gunners were Talain and Moormen (Muslims). Besides these, there were a large body of Rakain armed with swords, who served chiefly as pioneers .... Colonel Erskines made them retreat to Raja Pallang .... it is to be observed that this was only the half of the force sent by the king of Ava....<sup>14</sup>

On April 5, 1798, Buchanan Hamilton while visiting Ratnapalang saw "a Havildar's party of sepoys. From this to the mouth of the Naaf a messenger is dispatched thrice a week, to bring intelligence from the frontier."<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, the number of Arakanese refugees who had been forced to leave their country was steadily increasing. To

provide them with food and shelter the British authorities built a number of refugee camps at Cox's Bazar area. Captain Hiram Cox was appointed to supervise the relief works. The extreme physical work was responsible for Captain Cox's premature death in the later part of the year 1798. His service to humanity is preserved by naming the place Cox's Bazar.

In September, 1799, Lieutenant Thomas Hill was sent to Burma to discuss with the Burmese government on the subject of the mass emigration of the Arakanese from their own country. He was directed to tell the Burmese authorities clearly and unequivocally that the British government would not expel the emigrants by force, although no pains would be spared to induce them peacefully to return to their native country. The Arakanese governor justified the military action taken by him on the ground that it was the British authorities who were giving protection to rebellious Mugs. The governor, however, declared that this unhappy incident should be forgotten and the old ties of friendship uniting the two countries should be restored.<sup>16</sup>

The magistrate of Chittagong gave an order that the troublesome Arakanese should be expelled from the British territory if necessary by force.

The voluntary repatriation of the Arakanese refugees were not safe. Buchanan's narratives give evidence of the cruel action taken by the Burmese authorities towards the emigrants who had returned to their native places. "A Rakain chief named Damaning had a few hundred attendants, and fled hither on the overthrow of his country by the Burmese. (Afterwards) he returned to Arakan, and with his whole family was put to Death by those sanguinary conquerors."<sup>17</sup>

In 1811 serious troubles arose in connection with the offensive operations against the Burmese authorities by an Arakanese rebel leader named Nga Chin Pyan, who is referred to under the name of King Bering in contemporary British records.

In February 1812, the governor of Arakan formally demanded the surrender of King Bering and other rebel leaders and declared that if the demand was not met with then he would pursue the rebels "to whatever quarter of the company's territory they may retreat."<sup>18</sup>

In pursuance of their conciliatory policy the British authorities sent Captain Canning to the court of Ava assuring the latter that the British authorities would do their best to restrain King Bering from attacking Burmese territory.<sup>19</sup> The Company's conciliatory policy did not produce any positive result.

In 1812 the magistrate of Chittagong took stern measures in dealing with the Burmese. "A company of troops were sent from Dhaka to the southern frontier in order to deal with the menaced invasion of the Burmese forces."<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, King Bering with his followers had made another hostile inroads into Arakan. He crossed the Naaf accompanied with about 500 followers and occupied a stockade at Maungdow. Col. Morgan tried in vain to stop him from making inroads into Burma. The government authorised the magistrate of Chittagong to offer a reward for the capture of King Bering and his principal associates.<sup>21</sup>

The warlike preparations of the British and the Burmese governments made the border areas very much insecure. In August, 1812, the magistrate of Chittagong reports : "The whole of the southern part of the district is in a state of confusion. The officers of the Thana at Tek Naaf were compelled to abandon their post."<sup>22</sup>

In April, 1814, a group of 500 Burmese troops, while pursuing King Bering, entered Chittagong. They proceeded upto Garjania and established a military base there. Captain Fogo officer commanding at Ramu, at once marched to the Burmese camp and forced the Burmese troops to retreat.<sup>23</sup>

Captain Fogo suggested a plan for strengthening the

border forces by recruiting the Arakanese refugees. He proposed the formation of 8 or 10 companies partly of Rakhaings and partly of other natives of this part of the district. This proposal, however, was not approved by the magistrate of Chittagong.<sup>24</sup>

In 1815, King Bering died. He was succeeded by Ryng Jeing. He was, however, kept in restraint by the British.

In the period between the years 1815 and 1825 a large territory of eastern India comprising Manipur, Cachar, and Assam was conquered by the Burmese. In 1818 the Burmese government demanded from the British government the surrender of Eastern Bengal which in their view constituted a part of the ancient kingdom of Arakan. The Burmese government claimed authority over the small island of Shah Pari which was surveyed by the British in 1801. This island is situated in the mouth of the Naaf on the British side. At the darkness of night, on the 24th September 1823, a thousand men landed on the island, overpowered the guard, killed and wounded a number of British citizens and drove others away from the island. The Burmese intruders, however, had retired from the island before the arrival of the British troops. The Shah Pari Dwip incident caused a serious deterioration in relations between the two countries.

On February 24, 1824, the British government declared war against the Burmese government. A group of soldiers under Captain Norton encamped at Ramu "to check any demonstration" on the side of Burma.

Early in May 1824 about 8000 troops under the joint command of the governors of Arakan, Ramree, Sandaway and Cheduba crossed the Naaf and proceeded upto Ratnapalong. Maha Bandula, the renowned Burmese general himself was directing the military operations from his headquarters in the capital of Arakan. Captain Norton advanced southward with his troops, but in a short time he moved back to Ramu. On May 13, the advancing Burmese army occupied the hills east of Ramu.

On the morning of the 17th May the Burmese army

were within twelve paces of Captain Norton's pickets, and the untrained local troops fled. The small force of sepoys was completely surrounded, and although for three days they maintained the struggle, they were at last compelled to retreat and then fell into the greatest confusion. Captain Norton and five other officers were killed, and the detachment was annihilated.<sup>25</sup>

The Burmese troops advanced upto Chakaria. The advancing Burmese army created panic everywhere in Chittagong,<sup>26</sup> resulting in a rush to safer places.

Maha Bandula's departure from Arakan put a halt to the Burmese advancement.

In January, 1825, general Joseph Morrison, the commander of the British garrisoning army at Chittagong marched to face the enemy. The army followed a road along the coast and reached Tek Naaf on February 1. The Burmese troops retreated to the 'City of Arakan'.

On April 1, 1825, general Maha Bandula was killed by an explosion of hand grenade. His death destroyed all hopes of winning war. The Burmese army could not stop the progress of the British forces from one stage to another and in the successive engagements they were completely routed.

By the Treaty of Yandabo, concluded in February, 1826, the Burmese agreed to accept the boundary as demarcated by the British government. Robertson, the magistrate of Chittagong recommended "the separation of Arakan from the Burmese dominion" to be joined with the province of Bengal Presidency.

After the subjugation of Burma by the British rulers, communication between Chittagong and Burma increased to a very great extent. Large number of Chittagong people migrated to Burma either in order to find work or for business purposes. Priests, preachers, politicians, scholars and literary persons visited to Burma and stayed there for a period

of time in their own interests. Regular naval communication between Chittagong and the Burmese ports was established to facilitate passenger traffic and trade activities.

**Note :**

1. *Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Affairs of the East India Company (1812)*, ed. W K Firminger, I, CXXI
2. A. C. Banarji, *Eastern Frontier of British India*, p. 100
3. *Memorandum*, p. 98
4. *Bengal District Gazetteer*
5. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 118
6. Buchanan, p. 53
7. *Ibid.*, p. 55
8. *Ibid.*, p. 52
9. *Eastern Frontier*, p. 103
10. *Ibid.*, p. 104
11. *Memorandum*, pp. 205-06
12. *Eastern Frontier*, p. 133
13. *Memorandum*, p. 107
14. Buchanan, p. 57
15. *Ibid.*, p. 53
16. *Eastern Frontier*, pp. 145-46
17. Buchanan, p. 55
18. *Eastern Frontier*, p. 179
19. *Ibid.*, p. 177
20. *Ibid.*, p. 179
21. *Ibid.*, p. 184
22. *Ibid.*, p. 186
23. O'Malley, *op. cit.*
24. *Eastern Frontier*, p. 195
25. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 121
26. *Ibid.*

## Chapter 4

# Administration

Administration of Chittagong under the British rule signifies the management of public affairs under the jurisdiction of executive, judiciary, police and other agencies. Some features of the district's administration may be discussed under the following heads.

### Civil and Revenue Administration

The British public administration inherited much of its features from the previous Mughal administration. The British rulers created the post of 'Chief' and gave its shape after the model of a 'Faujdar'. Important officers, such as diwan, qazi, bakhshi, poddar, peshkar, khazanchi, etc. were allowed to remain in their respective places.

The chief executive of the district under the diwani rule was the Chief who was appointed by the East India Company authorities to act as a ruler of the district. He was also named Resident. Harry Verelst was appointed Chief on December 1, 1760. He was to be assisted by a council which was consisted of Harry Verelst, Randolph Marriot and Thomas Rumbold. Mr. Wilkins was appointed assistant and Gokul Chand Ghoshal was appointed diwan. The council not only gave 'advise' to the Chief but also took some share in the functions of administration. Between the years 1761 and 1769 the Chief and the council jointly performed the executive functions. The Chief, however, acted under the authority of the East India Company at Calcutta.

Regarding the discretionary powers and functions of the Chief the District Records report :

Whatever directions the Chief may think proper to issue for the better regulating and conducting the Company's

business under his management or for explaining any matters he may think necessary to enquire into, in his superintendence of the several Departments are to be implicitly obeyed.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Chief was invested with wide power and a good deal of responsibility. He was the principal executive, controlling the whole body of officials of the district. All kinds of official appointments were subject to his approval. He controlled the management of financial affairs. He was the chief judicial officer having the functions concerning the court of law. He was in charge of the army that was stationed in the district.

In 1766 the Governor and Council in Calcutta decided that the collection of revenue of the district should be the special responsibility of the Chief of Chittagong. Accordingly, the Chief was directed to supervise the functions of the officials related to the collection of revenue.

Thus the Chief also became the collector of revenue. H J Cotton writes that "the Chief of Chittagong had almost from the first been designated as Collector when addressed in his revenue capacity."<sup>2</sup>

The Chief of Chittagong as the principal revenue officer undertook the works of measurement of land in 1764. He had to evaluate the quality of land and assess the amount of money to be paid.

The Mughal administration of justice had its own system of law courts. The Mughal judiciary was divided into three courts, the Nizamat Adalat or civil court, the Faujdari Adalat or criminal court and the Diwani Adalat or revenue court. Nizamat Adalat was presided over by the Qazi, Faujdari Adalat was presided over by the Faujdar and Diwani Adalat was presided over by the Diwan.

Warren Hastings made the judicial system shorter and divided the judiciary into two branches: (A) Nizamat (including Diwani) Adalat or civil court and (B) Faujdari Adalat or criminal court.

These courts were established in every district in 1772<sup>3</sup> and started their operation in 1774.

The judicial arrangement made by Warren Hastings persisted till 1861. On the 6th August, 1861, this arrangement was abolished.<sup>4</sup>

The cutchery or the government secretariat was kept open on every Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday for the disposal of civil suits relating to landed property and on every Monday, Thursday and Saturday for the trial of criminal cases.<sup>5</sup>

During the Mughal rule, the diwan held an important post in the revenue administration. Under the diwani rule (1760-73), the post of diwan was retained although he lost much of his former power as a chief financier and as a diwani judge. In 1766 important financial duties of a diwan were transferred to the office of the chiefship.

The period between the years 1768 and 1793 is marked by series of administrative events that frequently changed the administrative structure of the district.

In 1769 British supervisors were appointed in the districts by the Calcutta authorities to supervise the administration especially the local collection of revenue.<sup>6</sup> In Chittagong, however, no supervisor was appointed. The Chief was performing the same type of functions as the supervisors were doing in other districts of Bengal.<sup>7</sup>

In order to make the collection of revenue more effective, a group of revenue officers named sazawals were given appointment. In 1771 there had been three sazawals performing their official duties.

The post of sazawal was not proved satisfactory with regard to the collection of revenue. In 1772 the quinquinal settlement was put into effect throughout the province and the office of sazawal was withdrawn. In the same year the office of the diwanship was transferred to the collector.

In 1772 Mr. Bently, the collector of Chittagong restored

the Mughal chakla system which had its revenue and civil aspects.

During the Mughal rule, the whole district was divided into nine chaklas. These were Nizampur (chiefly Mirsarai Thana), Bhatiyari (comprising the greater part of Sitakunda Thana), Aurangabad (comprising Hathazari and Fatikchhari Thanases), Noapara (greater portion of Raozan Thana), Rangunia (comprising the valley of the Ichamati), Chakrasala (comprising Patiya, Satkania and Boalkhali Thanases), Dohazari (comprising portions of Patiya and Satkania Thanases) Banskhali, Deang (comprising Anwara Thana). To facilitate revenue settlements chakladar was appointed in every chakla. He would be responsible for regular collection of revenue. They were also connected with the works of civil administration. The chakladars were remunerated by the revenues derived from 'secreted land.'

The chakladari system could not be persisted long owing to the active opposition of the zamindars.

After the abolition of the chakladari system the district authorities proceeded to make settlements with the zamindars directly. Collector Goodwin was directed to make agreements with the leading zamindars of the district to ensure regular collection of revenue. This arrangement was known as farmer security system. By this system the zamindars were converted to the farmers who could retain their tracts of land on payment of a fixed sum of money to the government. The securities were to be the guards and guarantors for fulfilment of the obligation of payment of revenue. The farmers and their securities were in general related to the payment of revenue. An interesting feature was that one farmer acted as surety for another. The failure of the quinquineal settlement put the farmer-security system to an end.

In 1774, a great change took place in the district's administrative system. In this year, "the European Collectors were recalled from the districts and native amils filled the place

of the Collectors.<sup>8</sup> The amil was given wide power over district's administration especially with regard to revenue affairs. In fact, he filled the role of a collector.

Under the amil the post of ameen was revived. The word ameen means a trustworthy person. The post of ameen was introduced in 1776. He was to investigate accounts connected with revenue collection. Krishna Dulal was the first ameen appointed in Chittagong by the Governor General. "The Governor General himself gave him a special letter of introduction."<sup>9</sup> He was to "collect from the zamindars and talookdars the accounts of the jumma, wasil bakee of the different land holders for some years past."<sup>10</sup>

Krishna Dulal left Chittagong on July 10, 1777. He was succeeded by Sreemunta Roy.

Under the amilship much of the Mughal system of government was revived. The amil and the group of native officials under him were responsible for the government of the district. The official staff of the collectorate during 1777 consisted of the following persons. Collector or amil, assistant collector, diwan, ameen, peshkar, head munshi, Persian muhuri, karkun, Bengali muhuri, writer, arasbegi, vakeel, khazanchi, poddar, naib, nazir.

The lower grade staff was composed of the following persons, jamadar, peons, daftari, coly, hadi (sweeper), mashalchi.

The Regulations of the 11th April, 1780 recommended the establishment of mufassil courts at Islamabad.<sup>11</sup> In the next year the recommendation was put into effect.

In 1781 some important changes gave a new shape to the administrative system of the district.

The native amil, whatever administrative efficiency he had could not be wholly understandable to the British authorities. In actual fact, a British collector was capable of being readily understood by the higher authorities. In 1781 the native amil was replaced by European collector. The British collector gained

control of revenue as well as civil administration of the district. His power was substantially increased.

The post of magistrate was officially created in 1781. He was entrusted primarily with administration of law and order. The collector concurrently held the post of magistrate. As a magistrate he performed duties of a civil administrator.

The post of judge was created in 1781. The judge was vested with highest power to make legal decisions especially in civil and revenue cases. The collector was required to perform the functions of a judge.

Thus the chief executive held simultaneously different administrative assignments. Mr. Cotton writes that there had been complete concentration of authority in the hand of a single individual, the collector of the district. Mr. Sumner in 1781 held the offices of "chief, collector, magistrate and collector of the government customs."<sup>12</sup> In 1782 Mr. James Irwin "held the offices of chief, collector, judge and magistrate combined."<sup>13</sup> Mr. Shearman Bird like his predecessor Mr. Irwin was judge, magistrate, and collector in one.<sup>14</sup> The collector thus became the sole representative of British authority over the district.

Though the collectorship, magistracy and judgeship were united in one agency, it is required that the functions of each of the three branches of administration should not be merged into one another. W R Gourley writes, "In 1787 by order of the Court of Directors the European civil servant ... was vested with the powers of a judge in civil matters, a collector of revenue, and a magistrate for the arrest of offenders ... He was directed to keep each of these offices wholly distinct."<sup>15</sup>

In 1781, the collector of Chittagong was asked not to make any kind of land revenue settlement with any body in the district. Referring to this official instruction of the higher authorities to the collector of Chittagong Cotton writes, "Orders were passed that the collectors themselves should not conclude the settlement, for it was deemed an official inconsistency that

those who were to collect under the settlement should have any part in the formation of it."<sup>16</sup>

With this view in mind, the Committee of Revenue choose an officer known as wadeddar to supervise the revenue settlement. The Committee of Revenue proposed on April 28, 1781 to appoint Uday Narayan Mukherjee as wadeddar in Chittagong.

The wadeddari system proved inadequate for the need of better revenue administration. It gradually declined in power and function.

To make the revenue collection system more effective, the government entrusted the collection of revenue to the native officer known as tehsildar in 1791. "The object of the Tehsildari system," according to a report (1776) of Mr. Francis Pierard, collector of Chittagong was "to facilitate the collection of the public revenue from the very numerous independent proprietors ... in this Zillah."<sup>17</sup> As many as four tehsildars were given appointment in 1791. One tehsildar was in charge of Chuckersallah (Chakrasala), another of Aurangabad (Hathaari-Fatikchari), another of Nizampur (Mirsarai)<sup>18</sup> and a fourth of Banscolly (Banskhali) and Doazari (Dohazari). The tehsildar was assised by sheristadar, head mohurrir and four mohurris. The Cornwallis Code of 1793 brought drastic changes in the administrative system of Bengal. The reporter writes about the code

It annulled the judicial power of all officers of the revenue and transferred the cognizance of all matters .... to the courts of Diwani Adalat. A new court of civil judicature was established in every district. The new Judge was a European covenanted servant of higher official rank than the Collector uniting in his person the powers of Magistrate as well as of civil judge and controlling the police within the limits of his division. This arrangement long continued, one officer in each district being Judge and Magistrate and another Collector.<sup>19</sup>

These reforms were brought to effect from the 1st May, 1793. Mr. E Colebrook, collector of Calcutta was appointed the first judge and magistrate of Chittagong. Mr. Cornelius Fryer

was at the same time appointed the collector of the district.<sup>20</sup> Dr. Francis Buchanan Hamilton while visiting Chittagong in 1798 saw magistrate and collector two different officials.<sup>21</sup>

By Regulation XXIX of 1793 the judicial functions of qazis were greatly curtailed. Regulation XLVI (1803) refers to the appointment of qazis in towns and pergunnahs “for the purpose of preparing and attesting deeds of transfer, and other law papers, celebrating marriages” but makes no allusion to judicial duties.<sup>22</sup>

By Regulation XL of 1793, the post of munsif was created, but their selection was entrusted to the zamindars. This preference in favour of landlords was, however, withdrawn by Regulation XLIX of 1803. In the beginning, the post of munsif was without remuneration. By Regulation XXXVIII of 1795 munsifs were permitted to appropriate entire amount of the fees levied on cases instituted before them.

“In Zilla Chittagong twenty one Munsifs were appointed in 1795. They had all ben Kazis.”<sup>23</sup> “In 1928 there were fifteen Munsifs posted in the district. Only five of them were Kazis.”<sup>24</sup>

According to O’Malley, in the beginning of the 20th century, fifteen munsifs were on official duties in Chittagong. Among them three were posted in Chittagong town, three in Patiya, three in Satkania, two in Hathazari.<sup>25</sup>

Munsif courts were established both in the town and in the mufassil areas. Munsif courts were established in north Raozan, south Raozan, Cox’s Bazar and Fatikchhari.

The posts of District Registrar and Assistant Registrar were created in 1793. Regarding their powers and functions the reporter writes in detail.

To the Courts of Justice a Registrar and one or more assistants were appointed from the junior branch of the European Covenanted Service. The assistants were assistants to the Judge and Magistrate in both capacities. As assistants to

the Magistrate they could be empowered by him to decide on cases to the same extent that the Magistrate himself was authorized under the Regulations of 1793. The Registrar was empowered to try civil cases not exceeding 200 rupees.<sup>26</sup>

The monthly salary of the district registrar was Rs 500.<sup>27</sup> The Madras system of departmental district registrar was introduced in May 1919 in Chittagong (along with some other districts)<sup>28</sup>

According to Mr. H J S Cotton, on the 28th August, 1790, the Court of Wards was first formally established, "with powers to superintend the conduct and inspect the accounts of all persons entrusted with the management of the estates of minors, females, lunatics, idiots and other disqualified proprietors (of land)".<sup>29</sup> "The institution of a Court of Wards was afterwards formulated by the regulations of 1793. In Chittagong it appears to have given trouble... in consequence of the scattered character of the mahal."<sup>30</sup>

In 1803, a superior order of Indian judges with authority to decide cases upto Rs 100 was created. They were designated as *sadr amins*. The post of *sadr amin* "was the designation of the second class of native judge."<sup>31</sup>

When the office of *sadr amin* was created in 1803 no specific qualification was laid down for it. Like that of *munsifs* the *sadr amins* were also appointed by the *sadr diwani adalat* on the recommendation of the district judges. The *sadr amins* were to perform official functions at the headquarters where the district judge held court.

By the regulation XV of 1805 the powers and functions of *sadr amins* were substantially increased.

The power of *munsifs* and *sadr amins* was considerably increased successively in 1814, 1821 and 1827. Soon after 1821 additional *sadr amins* were posted at subdivisional headquarters. *Munsifs* were empowered to try suits upto Rs. 300/-.

In 1824 the *sadr amins* were made salaried servants of

the government. Official approval now became necessary for every appointment. In general, the selection was made from persons who had formerly held ministerial offices of peshkars, nazirs and sheristadars of the provincial and district courts and from persons of recognised academic attainments. By 1868 "the designation of Sadr Amin was changed to subordinate judge."<sup>32</sup>

The later part of the British rule witnessed the unification of magistracy and collectorship in one person and the gradual growth of power of the magistrate collector.

The Criminal Procedure Code, 1882 increased the police power of magistrate collector. The Reform Acts of 1909, 1919, 1935 invested the collectors with greater power with regard to judicial administration. The administrative reporters specifically describes the powers and functions of the magistrate collector as follows :

As Collector, he supervises the collection of the various branches of the revenue, and is the head of all the departments connected with it; as District Magistrate he is responsible for the administration of criminal justice in the district, and is vested with certain well defined original and appellate criminal powers. The district jail.... is under his general control, while as head of the police, he exercises a general supervision over the force at his disposal. He is the ex-officio chairman of the District Board, and as such supervises local education, sanitation and the execution and administration of all local public works.<sup>33</sup>

The administrative historian H E Hennessy writes about the powers and functions of the magistrate collector as follows :

The Magistrate Collector is the head of the district and has to care for the details of administration in that district. He must gather the land revenues and taxes, keep records of land and registers, administer criminal justice, and control other departments in the district coming as he does, into contact with all classes of people, his duties are most important. District Boards afford him advise and information....<sup>34</sup>

The residence of the magistrate collector during the 18th century was built on the hill known as Rung Mahal.<sup>35</sup> Afterwards, his residence was removed to modern D C Hill.

By a regulation of 1833 (Regulation IX), the post of deputy collector was created. In 1843 the post of deputy magistrate was created.

In 1841 the post of additional collector was created "to conduct the superintendence and direction of all measurement, settlement and resumption operations. The salary of the additional collector was fixed at Rs 26,000 per annum, which is the salary of a Magistrate and Collector."<sup>36</sup>

The post of joint magistrate has been referred to the events of the year 1833. In that year, Mr. George Augustus Chicherley Plowden was appointed joint magistrate of Chittagong.<sup>37</sup>

According to Buckland, "the appointment of Honorary Magistrates to assist the judicial work of the country dates in Bengal practically from the year 1860-61"<sup>38</sup> O'Malley mentions the bench of honorary magistrates at Chittagong as well as at Cox's Bazar. The honorary magistrates were mostly recruited from the enlightened and influential section of the native society.

The British period witnessed gradual development of the administration of justice in the district. The district judge is vested with overall authority for the judicial administration. He is the presiding officer of a civil court. By the Regulation XV of 1805 a Hindu and a Muslim law officer called pandit and maulvi respectively used to be attached to every district court. Their function was to expound the laws from the religious scriptures in cases referred to them by the judge.

Judicial functions are divided into two branches, civil and criminal. Civil justice is related to the rights of private individuals. Criminal justice is performed according to the laws that deal with criminal offence.

Civil justice in the beginning of the 20th century, according to O'Malley, consisted of the district judge, two sub judges

and 15 munsifs viz, three munsifs of Chittagong, three munsifs of Patiya, three munsifs of Satkania, two munsifs of Hathazari and one munsif in each of the following places, North Raozan, South Raozan, Cox's Bazar and Fatikchhari.

Criminal justice, according to O'Malley, was administered by the district and session judges, the district magistrate, the joint magistrate and the deputy and sub deputy magistrate stationed at Chittagong and Cox's Bazar. Chief of the judicial courts, according to H E Hennessy, was "the district court of sessions; its presiding officer is known as the district and sessions judge. He may pass sentence in any civil or criminal case."<sup>39</sup>

The post of sessions judge was created in 1831. Sessions means the sitting of a judge in court for the purpose of trying offenders with the aid of jurors. The judge in relation to a criminal court of law is called the sessions judge.

It was declared (Regulation VII of 1831) competent to government to invest the civil judges with full powers to conduct the duties of the sessions.

"By Act III of 1835 the government was authorized to transfer any part or the whole of the duties connected with criminal justice from any commissioners of circuit to any sessions judges.

"Regulation VII of 1831 and Act III of 1835 were both repealed by Act VIII of 1868.... All sessions judges are appointed under the rules of the code of criminal procedure."<sup>40</sup>

In 1862 Lt. Governor Sir Cecil Beadon was instructed to introduce jury system under Section 322 of the Criminal Procedure Code."<sup>41</sup>

All cases have a jury consisting of twelve members. The jury hears the proceedings of the case and the summing up by the judge, it then declares whether the accused is guilty or not. This declaration must be the opinion of the majority of the jury, if the case is to be closed; but the judge is not bound by their opinion; he may agree with their opinion and

end the trial, or he may disagree and have the case tried again before another jury.<sup>42</sup>

The introduction of jury system is a significant step to the involvement of public in the court of law.

The civil service means all governmental functions under the Crown except military and naval functions.

The civil service system, introduced by the British government was the mixture of the Indian especially the Mughal mansabdari system with the European civil service.

Indians were made eligible for the government office, when entrance to the Indian civil service was thrown open to a competitive examination in 1853.

Provincial executive service or Bengal civil service came into operation in 1884. Before 1884 officers were appointed by patronage system. From this time the officers were appointed on the basis of a competitive examination.

Referring to the sanctioned office staff of the district O'Malley writes (1909) :

At Chittagong the sanctioned staff consists of six Deputy Collectors, of whom four are Magistrates of the first class, including usually of Joint Magistrates, and two are vested with the powers of Magistrates of the second or third class in addition to these officers, there are generally two Sub-Deputy Collectors, and occasionally an Assistant Magistrate stationed there.<sup>43</sup>

The chief secretariat of the district is known as sadar katchery. Katchery means "an office of administration, a court house."<sup>44</sup> The existence of the katchery dates back to the pre-British Mughal period.

The working force of the sadar katchery in the beginning of the 20th century was as follows : peshkar, muhuree, munshi or writer, khajanchi or treasurer, nazir, government amin, sheristadar.

In 1786 the collector of Chittagong complained to the higher authorities about the poor condition of the kutchery buildings involving risk to human lives. "It has often happened during the present rainy season", he wrote, "that I have been obliged to keep back part of the business of the public for days together because I did not chose to hazard the lives of public officers by insisting upon their going into the buildings for the purpose of paying or receiving money..."<sup>45</sup>

The present katchery buildings were built on the top of the Katchery Hill (Fairy Hill) in the beginning of the 19th century.

The Christian holidays (especially X'mas) involved vacation for a number of days when government offices, schools, and business premises were closed. An Act declaring holidays for Ramzan and Durgapuja was passed in 1800.

### Decentralization of administration

Decentralization of district administration under the British rule started in the middle of the 19th century. From this time much of the functions of the district government were transferred to the authorities of the subdivision, thana, municipality, local boards, port trust etc.

The subdivisional system, in the view of O'Malley, was introduced in 1854. The district of Chittagong was divided into two subdivisions or mahakumas viz, Chittagong sadar and Cox's Bazar.

Each of the subdivisions was divided into thanas and each thana was subdivided into mauzas.

Administration of Chittagong sadar sub division was under the direct supervision of magistrate collector while Cox's Bazar was under the control of a subdivisional officer who belonged to the category of first class magistrate.

The powers and functions of a sub divisional officer have not been delineated in any Act or Law. Referring to his

administrative status Mr. Hennessy writes, "A subdivisional officer is the head of a subdivision of a district. His duties are similar to those of the collector, to whom he has to report and whose instructions he must fulfil."<sup>46</sup> His principal job was to manage administrative affairs of his locality.

The smallest territorial unit was mauza (or village). In 1872 the number of villages or mauzas was 1062.

Every mauza was divided into mahallas.

Most of the mauzas or villages had a local body called panchayat consisting of influential villagers. The head of the panchayat was called matbar or morol whose chief function was to deal with private disputes and criminal conduct of an individual.

### Police Administration

Police system is the basic law enforcement and order maintenance institution. During the Mughal period police administration was performed essentially by the military groups such as kotwal, daroga, dafadar, chowkidar, pikes etc.

The British rulers developed an elaborate police system based on the Mughal system of police administration. Regarding the origin of the British police system Gourley writes, "Resolutions passed by the Governor General in Council on the 7th December 1792.... is the foundation of police law in Bengal".<sup>47</sup>

The Cornwallis Code gave the police a new shape. According to the Regulation XXII of 1793. "Magistrates are to divide their districts into police jurisdictions.... the police jurisdictions are to be named after the central places."<sup>48</sup>

The chief police officer in charge of a thana or police station was named daroga. Regarding the powers and functions of a daroga the Regulation XXII of 1793 states :

.... the guarding of each jurisdiction is to be committed to a daroga or super intendent with an establishment of officers.... The magistrates are to nominate the darogahs....

the general duty of the police daroga and of the officer appointed to act under him was (1) to maintain the peace; (2) to prevent, as far as possible the commission of all criminal offences; (3) to discover and apprehend the offenders; (4) to execute processes and obey orders transmitted by the Magistrate; and (5) to perform such other services as are prescribed by the regulations....<sup>49</sup>

Thus the daroga was given a wide power over his respective area. "The daroga system proved to be the mainspring of the strength of Government."<sup>50</sup>

"The Regulation XXII of 1813, by which the Magistrates were directed to divide their respective zillahs or districts into police jurisdictions of ten coss, or twenty miles square. These police jurisdictions were to be numbered and to be named after the places at which the darogahs or super intendants were stationed. The magistrates were forbidden to change the names or numbers of the jurisdictions or to alter the limits of them without the sanction of the Governor General in Council. And just as the jurisdiction was called by the name of its headquarters; so the term thanah which originally only meant the police station, came to be applied to the jurisdiction subordinate to that station. This then is the origin of the thanah divisions of Bengal - divisions which have been for years growing into greater importance, and are now utilized to a very large extent for other than police purposes.<sup>51</sup>

The aim of the Indian Police Act, 1861 was "to make it (the police) a more efficient instrument for the prevention and detection of crime." According to this Act, the superior officer of the district police would be designated as the district superintendent of police.

In 1920 the sanctioned strength of police was as follows :

Sadar sub division : superintendent-1, assistant superintendent-2, deputy superintendent-3, inspector-4, sub inspector-6, sergeant-6, assistant sub inspector and head constables-7.

Cox's Bazar sub division : superintendent-1, assistant superintendent-1, deputy superintendent-1, inspector-7, sub inspector-51, sergeant-2, foot constable-80.<sup>52</sup>

The sanctioned strength of police remained same till 1930 Reserve police. In the district a reserve police force was kept ready to control outburst of violence.

The whole police force was under the control of the district magistrate.

The police force is divided into several departments according to the nature of functions. These are as follows :

A. Town police. It was independent of the Inspector General (the head of the police organization in the province) and performed its duties under a commissioner who was the head of town police force. In 1905 the Chittagong town police was constituted of three head constables and sixty constables.<sup>53</sup> The headquarters of the Chittagong town police was situated in Kotwali the former headquarters of the city police during the Mughal period.

The Cox's Bazar town police was constituted of one head constable and seven constables.<sup>54</sup>

B. Rural police. Regarding the rural police administration the Local Police Act, passed in 1856 was a significant step in controlling rural crime. According to this Act, the responsibility of maintenance of law and order was entrusted to a chowkidar. He was appointed by the district magistrate.

The purpose of the Chowkidari Act of 1870 was enacted "to improve the position of the village chowkidar." The duties of a chowkidar were "to give information to the police, to arrest proclaimed offenders, to prevent crime."<sup>55</sup> Taxes were realised from the local people for payment of the chowkidars.

The rural police force for the security of villages was composed of 2411 chowkidars and 215 dafadars, who were paid at the rate of Rs 5 and Rs 6 per month respectively.

C. Water police and the Coast Guards are the branches of the police forces whose job is to keep watch on the coast in order to help safe anchorage of ships, to stop piracy and to check smuggling of goods from the ships.

D. Railway police are those who work for the safety of the railway passengers.

E. Fire brigade (Damkal Bahini) was established by the Act of 1894 especially in the town area as a branch of police department. The employees are trained to put out fires and to rescue people from fires.

Besides the police, there were some groups of armed people, whose duty was to protect place, persons and property. These were as follows :

Armed guards (barkandaz). High officials and influential peoples during the East India Company period needed armed guards especially if they were desirous of going to distant places. Guards stationed in the government offices were furnished with simple weapons.

Village Defence Party - In order to maintain law and order in the rural area, village defence party was created during Swadeshi movement period.

Referring to the village defence party's ability to control the activities of wrong doers the administrative reporters writes that "in 1924-25, the Defence Party performed praiseworthy jobs."<sup>56</sup>

District Intelligence Branch. The criminal investigation department is chiefly engaged in the secret finding out of crime.

During the Independence movement the police departments were given the added responsibilities of finding out underground revolutionaries, discovering the shelters of the suspects and keeping a close watch on the passage of the revolutionaries.

The police also had the duty of regulating political

meetings, anti government processions, religious gatherings (mela) like Sitakunda mela, drama performances. In cases concerning proscribed political activities the police were required to write police reports to higher authorities.

Fandi or petrol police became the mainstay of the police system during the Independence movement.

Persons who have to undergo a term of imprisonment, and the prisoners while under trial are kept in the jail. The existence of Chittagong District jail goes as far back as the beginning of the British rule. The jail in the beginning of the 20th century had an accommodation for 189 prisoners.<sup>57</sup> The accommodation capacity gradually increased. In 1930, the jail furnished accommodation of 320 prisoners. The Cox's Bazar subjail was established a little before 1921. Its accommodation capacity was 20.

### **Armed forces**

At the time of the cession of the district the British garrisoning army constituted of five hundred European horse, two thousand European foot and eight thousand sepoys.<sup>58</sup> With a portion of this army Verelst, the first 'Chief' of Chittagong invaded Tripura and conquered it.

An auxiliary force, which was a branch of Indian army was stationed in Chittagong to protect the district from foreign attack and incursions of the hill tribes. "The auxiliary force is formed of European British subjects, and as meant as a reserve to the British section of the regular army."<sup>59</sup>

Navy is a part of the British armed forces. An organized navy called nawwara had been in existence in Chittagong port since the Mughal period. The chief officer of the navy was designated as Daroga i Nawwara whose references are mentioned in contemporary sources.<sup>60</sup>

### **Local Administration**

Local administration was vested in the local authorities

appointed or elected to conduct the activities of local government within limited area. The agencies of local administration consisted of (a) the Municipal Board and (b) the District Board.

**Municipal Board** - To conduct municipal administration in the Chittagong city a Municipal Board was formed in 1864. The Board was consisted of ward commissioners who controlled the city administration. The District magistrate was to act as the ex-officio chariman of the Board.

The powers and functions of a Municipal Board were connected with providing amenities to the inhabitants of the locality like health and education services, social welfare services, the water and swerage system, town planning and development of roads, markets etc.

**District Board** - The British government performed praiseworthy job in framing a structure of rural administration on district level. In April 1885, the Local Self Government Bill was passed by the Bengal Legislative Council and it came into operation on the 1st October, 1886. The Act provided for a District Board which would have the responsibility of supervising and controlling the local bodies. It was proposed that a Union Committee should be established "for the management of village affairs."

"A group of unions was to constitute the circle of a local Board, vested with certain executive powers and responsibilities." The official head of a circle was called circle officer.

On April 5, 1887 by a government decree the Chittagong District Board was created and on May 3, 1887, the Chittagong District Board started functioning.

The district magistrate was to be the ex-officio chairman of the District Board. The local boards and Union Committees were to act under the District Board. It was proposed that two thirds of the members of the District Board were to be elected.

The principal functions assigned to the District Board and

the union committees were as follows :

Development of roads and communications

Better management of educational institutions. "District Boards were to manage public, primary and middle class schools other than those for Europeans and Eurasian."

Running of hospitals and dispensaries

Supervision of rural sanitation

Vaccination against epidemic diseases

Relief operations

Conducting census

Construction of officers bungalows and their supervision

Organizing melas (fairs) and exhibitions

Construction of railway roads

Supply of drinking water

Construction of government buildings

Other welfare works<sup>61</sup>

The number of members of the District Board increased in later times. In 1905 the District Board consisted of 19 members. Among them 13 members were elected and 6 members were to be nominated by the government. In 1905-06, 7 members were Europeans and 2 members were Muslims.<sup>62</sup>

In 1921 chairmanship of the District Board was declared to be elected.

In 1936 the total number of members of the District Board was 30. Among them 20 members were elected and 10 members were nominated.<sup>63</sup>

The income of the District Board derived mainly from cesses levied on property, transport, sale of commodities etc. A portion of spending was financed by grants from government.

With the passing of time the trends in local governments have been toward the expansion of decision making body and the greater participation of citizens in the local administrative process.

**Note :**

- 1 *Bengal District Records, Chittagong*, p. 31
- 2 *Memorandum*, p. 15
- 3 Henry Yule and A C Burnell, *Hobson Jobson*, p. 5; *Firminger*, 1, 6
- 4 C E Buckland, *Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors*, 1, 278
- 5 'Verelst to Vansittart', qt. *Bangladesh District Records*, 1, 135
- 6 *Firminger*, p. clxv
- 7 *Memorandum*, p. 15
- 8 W W Hunter, *Bengal Manuscripts Records*, 1, 19; *Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1911-12*, p. 40
- 9 *Memorandum*, p. 26
- 10 'Warren Hastings to Francis Law dt. 31st January, 1777', qt. *Memorandum*, p. 25
- 11 *Firminger*, 1, ccxc
- 12 *Memorandum*, p. 35
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 36
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 75
- 15 W R Gourley, *A contribution towards a History of the Police in Bengal*, p. 25
- 16 *Memorandum*, p. 31
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 76
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 *Bengal Administrative Report, 1911-12*, pp. 41-42
- 20 *Memorandum*, p. 75
- 21 *Buchanan*, p. 123
- 22 *Hobson Jobson*, p. 179
- 23 'Sadar diwani adalat, proceedings', qt. *Bengal Past and Present, 1968*, p. 206
- 24 'Civil Judicial Consultations, 12th Oct. 1830, No. 27', qt. *BPP, 1968*, p. 209
- 25 O'Malley, *op. cit.*
- 26 *Report on the Administration of Bengal 1911-12*, p. 42
- 27 *Memorandum*, p. 75
- 28 *RAB, 1922-23*, p. 36
- 29 *Memorandum*, p. 199
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 *Hobson Jobson*, p. 862

32 *The History of Bengal, 1757-1905*, p. 149

33 *RAB, 1911-12*, pp 53-54

34 H E Hennessy, *Administrative History of British India*, p. 163

35 *Memorandum*, p. 229

36 *Ibid.*, p. 121

37 *Ibid.*, p. 119

38 Buckland, *op cit.*, p. 227

39 Hennessy, *op. cit.*, p. 167

40 *RAB 1911-12*, p. 45

41 Buckland, *op. cit.*, p. 322

42 Hennessy, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-68

43 O'Malley, *op. cit.*

44 *Hobson Jobson*, p. 287

45 'Bengal Revenue Consultation Jan. 29, 1787' qt. A Aspinall, *Cornwallis in Bengal*, p. 138

46 Hennessy, *op. cit.*, p. 163

47 Gourley, *op. cit.*, p. 29

48 *Ibid.*

49 *Ibid.*, pp 30-34

50 B B Misra, *The Central Administration of the East India Company, 1773-1834*, Manchester, 1959, p. 341

51 *Census Report, 1872*, p. 89

52 *Bengal District Gazetteer, Vol B*, pp. 19-21

53 O'Malley, *op. cit.*

54 *Ibid.*

55 Gourley, *op. cit.*, 106

56 *RAB, 1924-25*

57 O'Malley, *op.cit.*

58 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 115

59 Hennessy, *op. cit.*, p. 170

60 Verelst to Playdell, 15th Feb. 1761

61 Buckland, *op.cit.*, I, 805-809

62 O'Malley, *op.cit.*

63 *The Panchayana*, Autumn Number, 1936 p. 122

## Chapter 5

# Society and Social Life

### A. Societies

People of Chittagong are divided into four principal organized religious groups, namely the Muslims, the Hindus, the Buddhists and the Christians.

#### (A) The Muslim Society

Islam was brought into Chittagong by the Arab traders and preachers as early as the tenth century A D. From that time Islam grew rapidly and within a short period the Muslims formed the largest religious group in the district.

Muslims of Chittagong mostly belong to the Sunni sect. Shiaism, the other major branch of Islam comprises a small section of the Muslim society of Chittagong.

During the early British period, the economic condition and the moral standards of the Muslims have fallen to a low level.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a number of reformation movements among the Muslims in order to correct the social abuses. Among these movements the Wahabi and the Faraizi movements were important.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth century, two socio political movements exercised deep influence on Muslim mind. These were the Pan-Islamic movement and the Khilafat movement.

The infiltration of western ideas in to the Muslim society and the authoritative behaviour of the European countries towards the Muslims produced serious problems in the Muslim society. To overcome this crisis a greater unity among the

Muslim countries was needed. This urge gave birth to a socio-political movement known as Pan-Islamic movement. The ideology of Pan-Islamism was preached by Maulana Jamaluddin Afghani (d. 1897) who resided for some time in Calcutta. One of his pupils Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi a native of Chittagong, pleaded the unity of Muslim countries in his speeches and writings.

Towards the close of the First World War, Muslims of all over the world became very much agitated on the issue of the efforts by the Allied Powers to dismantle the Khilafat and to dismember the Turkish empire. The Muslim agitators called for the restoration of the Khalifa's power and prestige as head of the Muslim world.

Both the Pan-Islamic movement and the Khilafat movement were essentially revivalist movements which created interest in learning that are connected with the past. The speeches and writings of the Muslim elite, writers and journalists emphasised on the past glories of Islam and the superiority of Islamic civilization over other cultures. The progressive section of the Muslim society joined the Khilafat movement to take part in the Islamic revivalism.

The Khilafat movement in the 1920s became a political movement in the framework of religious movement.

Writing of a large number of biographical works on illustrious Muslims and a great amount of historical literature emphasising on the past glories of Islam testify to the spread of idea of Muslim revivalism.

There were basic differences between the socio-religious movements like Wahabi and Faraizi movements and the socio-political movements like Pan-Islamic and Khilafat movements. The Wahabi and Faraizi movements were essentially fundamentalist movements, which were characterized by religious zealotry. Anything which is not in conformity with religious standards were regarded as profane. These two movements were antiwestern in character.

The Pan-Islamic and Khilafat movements on the other hand were liberal and progressive in character. The Pan-Islamists and the Khilafatists were tolerant to other creeds. The Dar ul harb idea of the Wahabis was abandoned by them. They favoured English education, studied western philosophy and even visited foreign countries to acquire knowledge.

There was a different type of reform movement which had no connection with the above mentioned movements. This movement, which was started in the later part of the nineteenth century, continued down to the early part of the twentieth century. Reform in Islam means the removal of defects. The reform movement in the twentieth century aimed at correcting abuses in religious observances, avoidance of evil ways of living, improvement of moral behaviour and training the youths for social works.

Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi remains the most outstanding reformist theologian in the first half of the twentieth century. As a moralist, he urged the people to uphold ethical behaviour in personal life. As a religious leader he induced the Muslims to follow Islamic doctrines strictly. He preached religious doctrines in the public meetings held in different places of eastern India. He was also an advocate of social reforms.

The reform movements undoubtedly made the Muslims religiously and politically conscious.

Many Muslim writers, scholars and theologians wrote a large number of works dealing with religious duties in everyday life. These works undoubtedly imbued the Muslims with religious fervour.

Muslim youths were encouraged to go to northern India to receive higher education in the madrasas especially the Deoband group of madrasas. The Deoband madrasas exercised remarkable influence upon the Muslim intellectuals of Chittagong. The aim of the Deoband system of instructions was to counteract the advancing flood of Christian missionary propaganda and to protect the Muslim society from its harmful

effects.

The Deoband educated scholars professed nationalist ideology.

A number of Muslim young students received education in Aligarh system. Later on, they formed the Aligarh group of Muslim elite.

The Muslim organizations of northern India had profound impact on the Muslim society of Chittagong. Some of these organizations were as follows :

(Central) National Muhammadan Association. It was founded by Amir Ali in 1878. Within the space of the year 1883 the Association opened its branches in different places of Bengal including Chittagong. According to the Article 9 of the constitution of the Association, the presidents of the branches would be the honorary vice-presidents of the central body and the vice-presidents and secretaries of the branches would be the members of the central body.

The Chittagong branch enrolled as many as 64 members. Khan Bahadur Ikram Rasul was its president and Julfiqar Ali of Chittagong Madrasa was its secretary.<sup>1</sup> Shaikh Riyazuddin Ahmad Siddiqi was an important member.

The Chittagong branch of the Association was officially functioning till 1909.<sup>2</sup>

Anjuman e Islami or Muhammadan Association. It was established at Calcutta in 1855. Kazi Abdul Bari, a prominent social worker of Chittagong was its vice-president.<sup>3</sup> A branch of the organization was also established in Chittagong and Kazi Abdul Bari was appointed its president. He held this post till his death in 1871.

The aim of the Muhammadan Association was to look after the welfare of the Muslim society.<sup>4</sup>

Anjuman e Ulema. A number of Muslim theologians and educated persons of Chittagong joined this organization.

The third conference of Anjuman e Ulema was held at Chittagong in 1918 with much enthusiasm. Maulvi Golam Qader a renowned social worker was the chairman of the reception committee. In his speech, he pointed out the evils of social stratification and treating common people differently.

The conference was divided into three component sessions, viz., literary, educational and religious. The conference greatly inspired the Muslims with confidence to do social development works.

**Motowalli Conference.** On December 15-16, 1938 the first session of All Bengal Motowalli conference was held in Chittagong. The conference contributed to the religious awareness of the Muslim society.<sup>5</sup>

**Jamaat e Ahle Sunnat.** It means the partisans of the Prophet. The followers of this sect supported all reforms leading to Islamic revivalism. The creed of the sect is to go back to the Quran and the authoritative Traditions (The Hadis). Its spokesman paper was the monthly Kohinoor which was published from 51, Ghat Farhad Beg, Chittagong.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century a large number of meetings and conferences were held in different parts of the district. Muslims of all walks of life joined these meetings and conferences in order to hear discussions about the current problems. Suggestions for the development of social condition were discussed and accepted.

**Religious life.** The Muslims follow their religious faith on the basis of doctrinal assent known as five pillars of Islam. The first and most important article of Islamic faith is belief in oneness of God (Tauhid). It is expressed in the formula that 'there is no God but Allah and the Prophet is the messenger of God.' The five time a day prayer (Namaj) is the second doctrine. Friday noon is the prescribed congregational prayer (Juma). Alms giving (Zakat) is the third duty. Fasting (Roza) especially in the Ramzan month is the fourth obligatory duty. Pilgrimage to Makka (Hajj) is the fifth requirement.

The religious life of a Muslim is guided by divine commands as contained in the holy scriptures. With the name of God they start work and commence journey. When they inform others of their performance, they utter that by the grace of God they had performed it. The will of God is held to be of supreme importance. In fact, faith in God is very important in their religious life.

The Muslim community was socially divided into two orders, ashraf (upper class) and atraf (lower class). Persons claiming of noble origin belonged to the ashraf class. Generally, the landlords, officials of high rank, educated and rich people consisted the upper class; the cultivators and labouring classes constituted the atraf section.

This classification on some occasions was so rigid that any kind of social communication between these two classes was strictly forbidden by social customs. In the first half of the twentieth century, this social discrimination became the target of attack by the social reformers.

The religious life of the Muslims are centred round the mosque. During the Independence movement, the mosques especially the Juma Mosque in the town became the centre of political commotion. The Imam and the religious leaders delivered spirited speeches after Juma prayer criticising government policy.

Muslim religious life is controlled by priest class. The priests are designated as maulvi, khondakar etc. Those who intend to be ordained to the priesthood are required to recite the Holy Quran aloud before audience.

Visit to a saint's graveyard (mazar) to gain super natural blessings (jiyarat) is an important part of personal religious life. Some of the important sacred spots are dargahs of Pir Badar, Shah Mohsen Aulia, Amanat Shah; chillah khana of Bayezid Bostami; mazar sharif of Shah Gharibullah; Maizbhandar Sharif etc.

## (B) The Hindu Society

The Hindu society is based on varnashram, meaning social classification according to qualities assigned to them. Hindus of Chittagong are divided into five categories, i. e. Brahman, Vaidya, Kayastha, Shudra and Harijan.

The Hindus believe that the social classification is divinely arranged. In course of time, this classification took shape of caste system. Each one of the castes produced a number of subcastes.

The Brahmanas form the clerical section of the Hindu community. They are ordained to a religious life after upanayana (initiation) before their teens. After upanayana they are capable of performing puja (act of worship) and after death services. They perform ritualistic functions in their personal lives.

Pandit Brahmanas constitute the superior class of the Brahmanas. The Purohita Brahmanas rank below the Pandits. They are functionaries authorized to conduct religious services. Agradani (receiver of alms), Nat (image maker), Jyotish (astrologer) occupy the lower position in the scale of social orders of Brahmanas because of their execution of lower grade religious functions.

The Vaidyas belong to the upper class of the Hindu community. On account of their advancement in education they are considered socially distinguished.

The Kayasthas are the most numerous class among the upper class Hindu community. Many Kayasthas claim superiority by means of education, holding of official rank and personal accomplishments. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Kayasthas gained superiority in social and political works.<sup>6</sup>

Some classes of Hindus are recognized as being socially different from upper class Hindus. They are named as Namashudras or Harijans.

According to religious affiliation the Hindus of Chittagong was divided into two principal sects, the Saktas and the Vaisnavas.

The Saktas are the worshippers of Sakti or energy. They believe that Sakti is essentially feminine and she is personified as an Almighty woman, identified with the Supreme Being. Sakti is generally worshipped as Durga, Kali, Bhavani etc. the forms the goddess is believed to have assumed for the destruction of certain demons.

Worship of Kali gained widespread adherents throughout the province during the Independence movement.

Animal sacrifice is an indivisible part of the worship of Kali.

The Vaisnavism enjoins the worship of Vishnu or Krishna as the supreme deity. It attaches importance more to the Bhakti cult (devotion) than to the Jnana (knowledge) and the Karma (ritualism) cults. The Vaisnavas believe in the sanctity and decency of life and animal sacrifice is prohibited in this creed. The important Vaisnava festivals are Janmashtami, Rathayatra, Rasayatra and Dol Purnima.

A noteworthy organization of the Vaisnavas of Chittagong was Chattagram Vaisnava Sammilani established in 1930s. Among their many religious observances the functions of Namkirtan every week, recitation from Vaisnava works especially the 'Chaitanya Charitamrita' were performed regularly. Another Vaisnava institution deserving to be noticed was Gauranga Sevashram established by Rukmini Ranjan Acharya Goswami, a celebrated Kirtan singer. A number of Vaisnava rites were performed in the Ashram throughout the year.<sup>7</sup>

The most famous preacher of the cult of Vaisnavism was Swami Vidyaranya (Dr. Bibhuti Bhushan Dutta) a great scholar and ascetic. He wrote a monumental work on the doctrine of Bhakti in five volumes.

These two major religious sects, in course of time, splitted

into numerous groups each of which has its own beliefs and practices.

Throughout the British period, the Durga Puja was the leading religious festival of the Hindu society. It falls during the month of Aswin (September-October). At this festival the image of Durga is worshipped generally for three days with great devotion and then immersed in a river or a pond.

Corporate worship has gained growing popularity since 1930s. According to the newspaper report, the sarbajanin Durgapuja was first organised in 1937 in the village of Dakshin Bhurshi.<sup>8</sup> In recent times, the Durgapuja festival is terminated in a programme of cultural functions.

### The Brahma Samaj

Brahmaism was introduced in Chittagong in the middle of the nineteenth century. A number of enlightened youths turned to Brahmaism the most prominent among whom was Dr. Annada Charan Khastagir. From that time the number of the Brahmas increased considerably.

Many Brahmas came to Chittagong from other parts of Bengal and choose the place especially the town area to make settlements. Referring to the numerical strength of the Brahmas the collector of Chittagong writes, "...nearly all had their homes in other districts. Since 1871 the number of Brahmas in the district has increased to 50 or 60..."<sup>9</sup>

A number of the Brahmas of Chittagong migrated to Burma. The Brahma community of Burma formed social and cultural organizations in order to solidify their community life. According to newspaper reports, one such organization was 'Nikhi! Brahma Pravasi Bangiya Sahitya Sammelan' (1923).

As the Brahma Samaj was becoming more and more expanding, a schism within the Samaj developed. Ultimately the Brahma Samaj was divided into three different sects.

The Adi Brahma Samaj held the conventional view of

Brahmaism and pledged allegiance to the leadership of the Tagores of Jorasanko.

The Nababidhan (New Dispensation) Brahma Samaj was founded by Keshab Chandra Sen in 1880s. On the 14th April, 1886, the first Nababidhan Brahma temple was constructed in Chittagong town for religious services.<sup>10</sup>

Disagreement with Nababidhan on religious practices led a group of the Brahmas to the separation from the Nababidhan Brahma Samaj. The separatist group was named as Sadharan Brahma Samaj. The Sadharan Brahma Samaj in Chittagong was founded by Shivanath Shastri in 1304 BS. (1897). Some distinguished Brahmas of other parts of Bengal attended the foundation ceremony.<sup>11</sup>

All these sects have their own mandirs (temples) where the public worship took place. Every mandir had attached social hall designed for social gathering and to listen to religious discourses.

The Brahmas are believers of the Upanishadic idea of the existence of Supreme Being known as Brahman. The Brahmas lay emphasis on congregational prayer and denounced observances of unnecessary rituals. One who administer sacraments and conduct prayer is known as Acharya.

Referring to the upasana or divine prayer by the Brahma Samajists in the mid-nineteenth century, Hunter writes, "Some few of the members of the Brahma Samaj meet every Friday and Sunday for prayer. This meeting is held in a house in the town of Chittagong, set apart for this prayer..."<sup>12</sup> Teaching of moral lesson and instucting code of ethics were the chief duties of Brahma leaders.

The Brahma womenfolk formed two organizations named Bhagini Samaj and Mahila Sammilani for common benefit.<sup>13</sup>

The regular course of religious procedures of the Brahma Samajists were as follows : Prayer in the morning, singing of scriptural hymns, prayer in the afternoon, recital of scriptural

texts and reading of religious essays, prayer at night.

The principal religious festival of the Brahmas is Maghotsava which is celebrated in the month of January.

The birth and death anniversaries of Raja Rammohan Roy were celebrated in a befitting manner. Discussion on life and teachings of Rammohan, observance of religious rituals appropriate to the occasion were some of the principal items of the celebration.<sup>14</sup>

In the latter half of the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century, the Brahma Samajists formed the most advanced section of the Hindu society. They excelled in academic field, provided humanitarian aid for the sufferers and pioneered in the publication of books, journals and newspapers. Many of the educational institutions, charitable dispensaries and humanitarian organizations owed their origin to the Brahma Samajists.

The Brahmas held liberal ideology which was favourable for social reforms. In the later part of the nineteenth century, they engaged themselves in the campaign against social abuses such as child marriage, polygamy etc. The progressive Brahma Samajists delivered speeches on personal ethics in the public gatherings and wrote articles in the periodicals on the corrupt social practices. Dr. Annada Charan Khastagir vehemently attacked the practice of permanent widowhood, Dr. Nabin Chandra Dutta in his published articles pointed out the physical disadvantages of child marriage. The Brahma social workers warned the people of taking harmful drugs that affect the body and mind. The principles of social equality and respect for the individual are publicly proclaimed by the Brahma Samajists. A number of enlightened Brahmas either taught or wrote about practising moral principles in daily life.

### Folk religion

It means the beliefs, customs and rituals which are held, practised and transmitted by the common people outside organized religion.

Folk religion knows no founder, written scriptures and professional clergy. It is transmitted orally rather than by written traditions.

Much of the features of folk religion are centred round the village deities and the river deities. Worship of banian tree and some other natural objects are parts of the folk religion.

Among the village deities, the most important is Ma Magadheshwari whom the village folk offer worship called seva.<sup>15</sup> Among the river deities Ichamati and Shrimati are important. People worship them to stop from being angry which is evident in the destructive flow during monsoon months.

Believers of the folk religion attach much importance to the supernatural power of the deity whom they worship by saying mantras and by performing propitiatory rites.

### **Religious life**

A major pattern of Hindu religious life is the traditional round of rituals which follow the individual throughout the life cycle. This is illustrated in the observance of ten religious ceremonies (Dashabidha Samskaras) which is comparable to the seven Christian Baptismal rites (Sacrament).

The Hindu Buddhist funerals are conducted according to their respective religious rites. Although details vary depending on the sectarian beliefs, certain common rites and customs can be noticed. As death approaches, the dying receives the last water from sons, daughters, family members and close relatives. Upon death the body is washed with water and sandal paste (santalum album). The deceased is then dressed in new garments. Then the body is led to a mortuary. The body is laid on the pyre with the head towards either the north or the south as the family customs permit. Incense burns throughout the period of cremation.

Hindus regularly perform rites to show great respect to the souls of the dead. Shraddhas are performed by the descendants of the deceased so that the manes may enjoy blessed

peace. Pindadan or offering of food to the fore fathers is an essential part of shradh ceremony. Near relatives of the deceased offer drinking water (tarpan) mixed with sesame to the dead persons. Tarpan is obligatory during the dark lunar fortnight ending with the Mahalaya (Pretapaksha).

Buddhists perform recital of suttas during shradh ceremony. Candles and incense are burned during performance period.

Among the Hindu community, Briddhi Shradh is required to be performed on every individual ceremonial occasion to comfort the spirit of the paternal as well as maternal ancestors.

Another ritual related to the ancestor worship is kindling of lamp in the sky (Akash Pradip). It is a lantern suspended from the top of a pole set up every evening during the month of Kartik in reverence to the deceased forefathers.

Observance of ceremonies, fasts, feasts, to go on pilgrimage, visiting a holy place constitute the essence of Hindu personal religious life. The Hindus believe in the occult powers of the celestial body and consult almanac on occasions.

The home was always a centre of religious practices. Offerings to the gods are essential part of Hindu religious practices. Food, fruit, milk, sugar, honey and other substances are offered to the deity. At the end of the ceremony participants take part in a communion in which they consume the food offered to the deity.

Tulsi (*ocimum sanctum*) is being planted in the vicinity of temples and dwellings. The erection of a temple either dedicated to a particular deity or for public worship "is a meritorious deed recommended to anyone desirous of heavenly reward."

Taking holy bath in the rivers and streams on special occasions is an important part of Hindu religious life. It is believed that the bathing in the sacred waters of a perennial river will derive spiritual benefit. Kattali Snan, Baruni Snan, and Shrimati Snan are three major sacred occasions for

bathing.

Journey to sacred places is an act of religious devotion. Wealthy people and ascetics travelled to the distant parts of India to visit sacred spots. While visiting a temple a Hindu makes a circuit around the temple.

### Religious structures

(a) Religious buildings used for the worship of deities. The most sacred place of pilgrimage in the district is the shrines of Sitakunda which attract pilgrims from distant places of the country. Sitakunda is the collective name for a number of shrines situated near one another. Each one of the temples is dedicated to a different deity.<sup>16</sup>

Barabkunda, a hot spring situated three miles south of Sitakunda is a holyplace of bathing. Buchanan Hamilton saw "several small temples dedicated to Siva and other gods" at Barabkunda.

The temple of Adinath is situated in Maheshkhali Island and is dedicated to Siva. The temple is visited by pilgrims in large number throughout the year.<sup>17</sup>

Ramkot temple, dedicated to Siva is situated near Ramu. Originally a Buddhist place of worship the environs of the temple contain relics of Buddhist images which give evidence of its existence as early as the tenth century A.D.

Chatteswari temple is consecrated to the worship of Chatteswari, the protectress goddess of Chattal or Chattagrama. The worship of the goddess Chatteswari dates back to ancient times.<sup>18</sup>

The shrine of Medhas Muni is situated on the top of a hillock at the village of Karaldenga in Boalkhali upazilla. According to tradition, the shrine was built by Medhas Muni, a sage of remote ages. The site was discovered by Swami Vedananda.<sup>19</sup> The temple is used for the worship of the goddess Dashabhuja (Durga).

Kalachand temple in Boalkhali upazilla is an imposing religious structure dedicated to Lord Vishnu. The beautiful image made of touchstone in standing position belongs to the Gupta period (3rd or 4th century A. D.)

Burakali temple at Dhalghat was erected by Taracharan Paramahamsa to worship the goddess Kali. It is a remarkable seat of Tantrik worship.

Ichamati Kalibari at Rangunia. The temple is connected with the worship of river deity Ichamati.

### (b) Shrines associated with holy personages.

There are a number of religious edifices where people come to worship the deity and to pay homage to the holy persons who constructed them. The devotees show great respect to the holy persons by singing songs in praise of them. Some of the noteworthy shrines are cited below.

Krishnananda Math, dedicated to the worship of Lord Krishna was founded by Swami Krishnananda. It is situated a few feet above the surrounding area. The outer hall is used for public worship and also a place of assemblage of devotees listening to religious discourses.

Kaibalya Dham is situated on the top of a hillock which belong to the Sitakunda range. In front of this edifice there is an imposing large hall specified for religious purposes.

Rishidham founded by Advaitananda Maharaj is situated at village Kokdandi in Banskhali upazilla.

**(c) Akhras.** An akhra means a house of religious retirement or a residence of seclusion for persons under religious vows. In these akhras the resident sannyasis performed worship of deities by saying prayers and singing devotional songs. There were a number of akhras in Chittagong town

The Dattatreya akhra. It was a building in which members of Dashnami sect lived together.

The Brindavan akhra. In this building members of the

Vaisnava community lived together.

Tulsidas Mohanta's akhra. The building was constructed by Tulsidas Mohanta for his followers to live in.

(d) Institutions established for propagation of religious faith of particular saints. Preachers are given responsibility to teach the people about the religious views of the saints. Some institutions devoted to the missionary work are cited below.

Ramakrishna sevashram. This is a religious and humanitarian institution established by a group of social workers under the leadership of Devendra Lal Das. Spiritual discourses are being given by missionary monks who visit the Sevashram periodically. The devotees show deep reverence for Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa by saying prayers and singing songs praising the great saint.

Satsangha ashram was founded by Thakur Anukul Chandra in the nineteenth century. The Chittagong branch was established by a group of followers some time in 1930s.

Prabhu Jagatbandhu ashram. The followers of Prabhu Jagatbandhu established this ashram on the Dev Pahar Hill. The Mahanam Sampradaya joined the ashram and formed one larger organization. In Baisakh, 1345 B.E. a Vaisnava festival and Namkirtana were held on a large scale in memory of Prabhu Jagatbandhu.<sup>20</sup>

Aurobindo ashram. The purpose of this organization is the study, appreciation and propagation of the religious views of Shri Aurobindo.

Chattagram Hindu milan mandir. It was founded by Swami Pranabananda, the president of the Bharat Sevashram Sangha. The purpose of this organization was to find out courses of action regarding the revival of Hinduism.

On September 13, 1938 a meeting was held in Oldham Institute to discuss the various problems faced by the Hindu

community. A proposal to organize a Hindu volunteer corps was adopted in the meeting.

Shortly after the conclusion of the meeting, an assembly of the Hindus was held at the J M Sen Hall. Babu Rasik Chandra Hazari presided over the meeting. Swami Purnananda, a prominent member of the Bharat Sevashram Sangha delivered an inspiring speech on the problems of the Hindu community and the ways and means to remove them. A talkie show on the past glory of the Hindus was exhibited.

**Religious fairs.** Periodical gathering at holy spots for the sake of gaining divine blessings is an important feature of Hindu socio-religious life.

The Shiva Chaturdashi mela at Sitakunda is the largest fair. W W Hunter narrates the fairs held at Sitakunda in the middle of the 19th century as follows :

The principal gathering is the Siva Chaturdasi festival on the 14th day of the moon sacred to Siva (usually in February). The pilgrims live at lodging houses kept for the purpose by Brahmanas, called Adhikaris. These men send out agents to almost every district in Bengal, to persuade people to visit the shrines; and each of the adhikaris is said to realize from three thousand to four thousand rupees at the Siva Chaturdasi festival. Besides the charge for lodging, the adhikari get everything which the pilgrims offer in the name of the gods, except the kar or cess, paid to the mahantas for the maintenance of the shrines. The Siva Chaturdasi festival lasts about ten days, and is attended by from ten to twenty thousand devotees.

Minor gatherings take place in or near the month of March and November, and on the day of every eclipse of the sun and moon. About two thousand to ten thousand persons attend on these occasions. The ascent of the Chandranath hill is said to redeem the pilgrim from the misery of a future birth, at the top of the hill there is a temple containing a linga.

There are numerous shrines surrounding Chandranath, and

also at Barabkund and at Labanakhya. All of these are visited by pilgrims.<sup>21</sup>

Since that time the number of pilgrims is becoming greater at our time.

W W Hunter also narrates the Jaisthapura fair (Surya khola) "held annually in worship of the sun (god)"<sup>22</sup>

### (C) The Buddhist Society

Buddhism was once a predominant religion in Chittagong. At present, the Buddhists constitute a group numerically smaller than either the Hindus or the Muslims.

Buddhist society of Chittagong is composed of diverse ethnic groups. These are Bengalee or the plains Buddhists, Chakma Buddhists, Magh Buddhists and Rakhaing Buddhists.

The Bengalee Buddhists live scattered in different parts of the district. The Chakma Buddhists live mainly in the northern part of Chittagong Hill Tracts. The Magh Buddhists live primarily in the southern part of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. A group of the Maghs (called Maung) had become detached from larger Magh group of tribesmen and at present live in the Khagrachhari District. The Rakhaing Buddhists live primarily in Cox's Bazar District.

Throughout the ancient and medieval periods Mahayana Buddhism was a predominant religious sect. The discovery of a large number of Bodhisattva images in different parts of the district indicates the predominance of Mahayana Buddhism in Chittagong from ancient times down to the middle of the nineteenth century.

Not much is known about the condition of Buddhism at the time of the beginning of the British rule. The great anthropologist Dr Francis Buchanan Hamilton (1797-98) travelled extensively in Chittagong District and came into contact with various classes of the Buddhist tribesmen. His narratives are useful sources of information about the condition of Buddhism

in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

The Mahamuni (lit. the great ascetic), according to Buchanan Hamilton was the chief deity of the Buddhists. The worship of Mahamuni in the Arakanese kingdom dates back to the ancient period. The worship was current in Chittagong during the period of the Arakanese rule in the district (1570-1666). All that information Buchanan Hamilton had learnt about the origin of Mahamuni from a Rakhaing priest of a Buddhist kyang are as follows : "Maha Moony (is) a brother of Godama (Goutama). .... There had been five Moonies, of whom Godama was the fourth but that he having obtained Nirban, was no longer to be worshipped. The God at present in power.... was Maha Moony."<sup>23</sup>

In another place of his accounts Buchanan named five moonies. They are Chaucasam (Shakya Muni), Gonagom (Kanaka Muni), Gaspa (Kashyapa Muni), Godama (Goutama Muni), Mahamoony.<sup>24</sup>

The Mahamuni temple at Pahartali (in Rangunia u. z.) serves as the principal centre of Mahamuni worship. The Chakma queen Rani Kalindi started the construction of the temple which was completed in 1870. The image of the Mahamuni was installed within the temple. Rani Kalindi inaugurated the opening of the temple with a special ceremony.<sup>25</sup> A periodical gathering called Mahamuni fair was organized at the time of the establishment of the temple and still being held since that time. Visitors are provided with various kinds of entertainment.

Besides Mahamuni, another deity named Phora (? Prabhu) Tara was worshipped by the Buddhists. Phora Tara as a principal deity among the Buddhists at the 18th century is referred to a Bengalee Hindu devotional song (ময়ে বলে ফরা তারা, গড় বলে ফিরিস্তিরা).

The principal sacred books of the Buddhists as late as the middle of the nineteenth century were, 'Magha Khamuja', 'Agartara Sutra' and 'Khaduttoyam'. In all these scriptural texts a mixture of animistic, Mahayanic and Hinayanic doctrines is

perceptible.

The 'Magha Khamuja' of unknown authorship was translated into Bengali by Dharmaraj Barua under the name of 'Dharma Purabritta.'

The 'Agartara' was one of the earliest and the most popular scriptural texts among the Bengalees and the Chakmas alike. The whole book was divided into sixteen chapters or 'taras'. The text was written in debased Pali language.<sup>26</sup>

The 'Khaduthoyam' written in proto Burmese and dealing with Lord Buddha's life and miraculous activities was translated into Bengali verse by Nilkamal Das under the name of 'Bouddha Ranjika'. The work was also translated into Bengali prose by Fulchandra Barua.

Buchanan Hamilton states that "the principal religious scripture" of the Rakhaing Buddhists was 'Kam-mua'. He found 'some very fine copies of this book' in a kiyang of southern Chittagong.<sup>27</sup> The eminent traveller further writes, "....Perhaps the Rakain edition of that book differs from the Burma, as I found, that there existed many differences in the religious doctrines of the two people."<sup>28</sup>

'Kama-mua' is probably the Arakanese version of Kama mukti or Nirvana. At present among the Bengalee Buddhists and the Chakma Buddhists this sacred book is known as 'Parinirvana Sutta.'

Buchanan Hamilton ascribes priesthood to "two ranks of priests : the Samona (sramana or samana) and Moishang (? mahasaya), the latter of whom are the superiors, and by the Bengalese are called Raulins<sup>29</sup> (> Arhat)" It may be assumed that these kinds of priests were related to Buddhist asceticism.

Earlier than the nineteenth century the common Buddhist priests used to live in village houses where they could offer their religious services. From the nineteenth century the Buddhist priests became familiar with living in monasteries apart from villagers under vows of chastity. The normal part of

the religious duties of the monks are daily recitation of Sutras and the worship of the Buddha.

**Religious reforms.** The second half of the 19th century is a period of changes in religious system in Bengal. Religious reformers preached new ideas of religion. In Chittagong, during this period, a great religious change was taking place in the Buddhist society.

The Buddhist monks took the leading part in the reform movement which aimed at correcting the religious abuses. In the middle of the nineteenth century Ven. Samgharaja Saramedha Mahathero was among the first Buddhists to recognize the need for a thorough reform of sectarian Buddhism.

In 1856 Ven. Mahathero came to Chittagong to preach the original teachings of the Buddha among the backward Buddhists of Chittagong. Although most of the Buddhists at that time were illiterate and ignorant of holy scriptures yet many of them very promptly responded to the call of Sangharaja Mahathero, as a result of which within a few years a great number of the Buddhists turned to Theravada Buddhism.

Ven. Sangharaja Mahathero's programme was carried on by a host of monks especially his disciples among whom Acharya Punnachara Mahathero, Jnanalankara Mahathero, Gunamaju Mahathero were prominent. They formed the first group of influential Buddhist religious teachers to recognize the need for a regeneration of Theravada Buddhism. This reformer group led a movement to wipe out monastic abuses and to restore strict observance of the Vinaya Suttas among religious minded people.

The body of religious tenets preached by Sangharaja was generally known as Sangharaja Nikaya.

**Monks and monasteries.** Buddhist monks are variously called Bhikkhu, Bhante (Bhaddanta), Thero etc. Monkhood or asceticism in Buddhism is not obligatory but preferable. Boys and youngmen are expected to join the monastery for a certain

period in their life time. "According to the Vinaya rules entry into the Samgha is an individual affair dependent upon the wishes of the individual and his family."<sup>30</sup>

Monks, however, do not live a solitary life. They live in groups under vows of poverty and chastity. They receive alms given by the laity. They break their wanderings during the rainy season (Barshabas) from July through August.

A monk is a member of a religious society named Sangha. The Sangha means a community of monks and nuns living in monasteries or hermitages.

On occasions conferences of Buddhist monks were held. In these conferences consultation, discussion, interchange of opinions take place. The senior priests explain the obligatory rites of the monks to the novice.

Residential quarters of the Buddhist monks are called vihara. A vihara is neither a temple nor it is to be used as a temple though a vihara may contain Buddhist images for worship. Vihara is called by the tribesmen kiyang which means a house of religious retirement for the priests under religious vows. There is hardly any Buddhist inhabited village which does not have either a vihara or a ashram or a kiyang. Some of the images contained in the kiyangs are of colossal dimensions.

Since early times a vihara has been a centre of religious services and education. Some of the viharas noted for religious activities and established during the British period are cited below.

The oldest Buddhist vihara of the present times is the Rajanagar Buddhist vihara established by Ven. Punnachara Mahasthavir in 1869. The vihara was patronized by the Chakma royal family.

The principal Buddhist vihara in Chittagong is Chattagram Bouddha vihara situated at Enayet Bazar in the town area. It was established in 1899 by Bhagirath Barua a renowned social worker. Humanitarians donated liberally to its development

fund. Maung Thawang, a rich merchant of Ramu donated Rs 450/- to its construction fund.

Sudharmadhara vihara in Silok was established in the beginning of the twentieth century.

Kanaimadari vidarsanaram vihara was established by Ven. Prajnalok Mahasthavir who stayed there for a period of time.

Satbaria Ratnankur vihara is one of the noteworthy shrines. It was established in the second decade of the twentieth century. Reputed Buddhist priests such as Dharmavamsa Mahasthavir, Dharma Raksit Mahasthavir stayed there for some time and delivered religious discourses at the assemblage of devotees.

A shrine named Gautamashram was established in 1915 by Saman Punnananda Sami in his native village at Uttarbhurshi.

Ramu Sima vihara was a noteworthy Buddhist shrine. The chief priest of this vihara was Ven. Vishuddhachara Mahasthavir.

The Buddhist shrine at Hoarapara was noted for the cultivation of religious learning.

Pahartali Mahananda Vihara was a noteworthy centre of Buddhist religion and learning. It was established sometime before 1930.

Kartala Belkhain Saddharmalankara vihara was a noteworthy Buddhist shrine. The renowned Buddhist scholar Banshadip Mahasthavir spent the concluding part of his life in this vihara.

**Religious life.** The Buddhists perform a series of religious rites throughout the year. All religious rites are centred round the worship of the Buddha.

Religious rites are conducted by the monks. Ritual chanting of the scriptural texts is an essential part of worship.

Incense, light and flowers are chief elements employed in the performance of religious rites some special days and events such as Baisakhi Purnima, Asharhi Purnima, Aswini Purnima, Kathin Chivar Dan, Pravarana etc. are performed ceremoniously.

All categories of religious rites are carried out at temples and the religious persons attend the ceremonies there.

**Organizations.** A very loose form of a Buddhist Association named Chittagram Bouddha Samiti was organized under the leadership of Ven. Gunamaju Mahathero and Krishna Chandra Chowdhury in 1879. Krishna Chandra Chowdhury was nominated secretary. It merged with the Bouddha Mahasamiti towards the close of the first decade of the 20th century.

Of all the Buddhist organizations the Chattagram Bouddha Mahasamiti was most important. It was established under the auspices of a group of social workers in the beginning of the twentieth century. Bhagirath Barua held the post of its president till his death in 1906. He was succeeded by Nagendra Lal Chowdhury. Ven. Dharmavamsa Bhikkhu and Satish Chandra Barua were nominated vice-president and secretary respectively. A branch of Chattagram Bouddha Mahasamiti was opened in Rangoon (probably in 1918)

Since its establishment, annual meetings of the Mahasamiti are being held regularly in different places of the district. A brief description of the events of some of the meetings is cited below.

The annual meeting of the Mahasamiti was held on the first Baisakh in 1906 in the precincts of the Pahartali Mahamuni temple. The meeting was presided over by Ven. Dharmalok Bhikkhu, a Chinese monk whose learned English speech was translated into Bengali by Birendra Lal Mutsudi.

The annual meeting of the Mahasamiti was held on the 24th Aswin, 1320 B.S. (11th October, 1913) at Pahartali. The meeting was presided over by Rev. Gunalankar Mahathero. The

chairman of the reception committee was Birendra Lal Mutsuddi.

The meeting congratulated Benimadhav Barua, Mahima Ranjan Barua and Rebatu Raman Barua on their academic performances in University examinations.

The meeting adopted a resolution urging the government to provide more facilities for Pali education in educational institutions. A resolution containing the building of a Buddhist hostel in the town was adopted.

In January, 1930, the Buddhist conference was ceremoniously held in the assembly hall of the Bouddha Vihara. Ven. Dharmavamsa Mahasthavir presided over the meeting. The joint secretary Birendra Lal Barua presented the proceedings of the Mahasamiti to the audience. Miss Jyotsnamoyee Chowdhury and others delivered speeches on different aspects of Buddhism.<sup>31</sup>

The annual meeting of the Bouddha Mahasamiti was held on March 12 and 13, 1938 at Bhagirath nagar, Hoarapara under the auspices of Aggaras Jayanti. Dr. Arabinda Barua presided over the meeting. Umesh Chandra Mutsuddi was the president of the reception committee. Discussions of the following social and political problems gave the meeting special significance. (a) Proper representation of the Buddhists in the provincial assembly, senate and syndicate of the Calcutta University, municipal and District Boards, management committees of educational institutions. (b) Awarding stipends and scholarships to the Buddhist students receiving education abroad. (c) Enhancement of the number of scholarships and stipends. (d) Advancement of female education.<sup>32</sup>

The sixteenth annual meeting of the Bouddha Mahasamiti was held in 1940 at Satbaria. The meeting was presided over by Rev. Dharmadhara Bhikkhu Tattvabhusan. A proposal urging the government to provide financial assistance for the talented Buddhist students was accepted in this meeting.<sup>33</sup>

On the 28th Baisakh 1350 (1944) the annual meeting of the Bouddha Mahasamiti was held at Fatenagar.<sup>34</sup>

The annual meetings and conferences played an important part in revitalizing Buddhist society. All classes of people joined these gatherings. Monks of different monasteries assembled for consultation. Delivering of speeches, reading of literary articles and discussions on them, recitation, reading of poems written by oneself, presentation of proceedings of previous meetings were some of the major agenda of these meetings.

The elite section of the Buddhist society became conscious of the negligence of the government to the welfare of the Buddhist community. Dr. Arabinda Barua while criticising the government policy says in the provincial council debate,

Of all the important minority communities of this province, the Buddhists are perhaps the only community that are most inadequately represented in posts of any importance under the Government.... Fixation of percentage in the services is now under the consideration of the Government and I hope Government will find out an equitable way for the representation of the Buddhist community in the public services....<sup>35</sup>

Since the later part of the nineteenth century, communication with the neighbouring Buddhist countries has been substantially increased. A number of monks and scholars visited Srilanka to train themselves more thoroughly in textual analysis. Exchange of ideas especially religious and cultural between the countries becoming increasingly effective. Dr. Benimadhav Barua, a scholar of subcontinental repute while visiting Ceylon delivered his memorable Ceylon Lectures.

A large number of Buddhists went to Burma either for job or for trade. Monks and scholars of Chittagong visited to Burma in order to preach religious doctrines there. Buddhist periodicals containing social issues and recent events were published in Burma. Buddhists of Chittagong formed such organizations

as Bouddha Mahasamiti in Rangoon to work for the welfare of their correligionists.

Buddhists of Chittagong maintained close contact with Thailand, Japan, Mongolia and other Buddhist countries. Monks of one country attended the religious conferences held in other countries. Monastic Buddhism in Chittagong was strengthened by establishing close connection with other Buddhist countries.

#### (D) The Christian Society

Christianity was introduced into Chittagong by the Portuguese missionaries in the latter part of 1530s. Within a short time the Christians living chiefly in Chittagong city area organized a social body. The Christian inhabitants are called Firingi, "the name given by the natives to Europeans in general, but generally understood by the English, to be confined to the Portuguese."<sup>36</sup>

**Ethnicity.** Christians of Chittagong were ethnically divided into three classes, (1) the Europeans, especially the Portuguese and the British, (2) the Eurasians, and (3) the native converts. The Europeans who were originally connected with different countries of Europe, permanently or temporarily took up residence in the district. The Eurasian is a name for persons of mixed European and Indian blood. They were wrongly called Anglo-Indians. In reality, they are the descendants of Portuguese father and native mother. Their surnames give evidence of the fact that their ancestors were of half caste origin. W W Hunter writes, "...the greater part of the Christian population of Chittagong consists of the descendants of the Portuguese adventurers and mercenaries who played such an important part in the history of Chittagong two centuries ago."<sup>37</sup> Among the natives, Christianity rapidly gained converts. A missionary's roles of a physician, a humanitarian and a teacher of Christianity were the effective means of conversion.

Though Christianity is centuries old the number of

Christians is comparatively of small size. While giving the statistics of the Christian population in Chittagong W W Hunter writes, "In the year 1859, the Feringis of Chittagong numbered 1,025 souls.... (In) the following year 1860 they had decreased to 985. In 1866 their total population was 865 and at the time of the census in 1872 they numbered only 854."<sup>38</sup>

Since 1872 there has been a slow increase in Christian population in Chittagong. In 1931 the total Christian population rose to 1609 souls.

**Christian settlements.** Most of the Christians live in the town area. At present their largest concentration is found in the Patharghata-Firingi Bazar area.

Regarding the Portuguese settlements in Chittagong as late as the 1790s, Dr. Buchanan Hamilton writes, "The Portuguese, who formerly had a grant of the place from the kings of Arakan, are still numerous and have a church."<sup>39</sup> Bandel Road, Feringi bazar, Miranda Lane etc. were some of the earliest Portuguese settlements in the town area. "The name of the old Portuguese settlement in Bengal" was generally known as Bandel.<sup>40</sup> "The name is a Portuguese corruption of (Arabic term) bandar .... and in this shape the word was applied among the Portuguese."<sup>41</sup>

Deang was an important place of Christian settlement as late as the early British period. There were some other places in the interior of the district especially Rangunia, Banskhali etc. where groups of native Christians lived. The revenue documents and literary sources give information about a family of Portuguese origin, surnamed De Barros which owned a large estate in northern Chittagong.<sup>42</sup>

**Religious sects.** Christians are divided into different sects based on doctrinal differences. Most of the Christians belong to the Roman Catholicism which was introduced into Chittagong by the Iberian missionaries in the middle of the sixteenth century. The most zealous of the Roman Catholics

were the Jesuits whose role is prominently conspicuous for their missionary activities.

Protestantism which came into being during the early part of the British rule, gradually formed a religious body in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The Protestant preachers taught the word of God to their native co-religionists through the medium of Indo Portuguese. They learnt Bengali and preached the natives about the glorification of the Christianity through the medium of Bengali in order to persuade them to accept it.

Anglicanism is in communion with the Church of England. Its existence in 1830 is known from contemporary sources.

**Christian churches.** A church is a building for Christian worship. The Christian church is commonly known in Chittagong as girja. The word is derived from Portuguese term igreja,<sup>43</sup> meaning a building for Christian worship. The Jesuits for the first time constructed a church in Chittagong urban area. It was built in 1538.<sup>44</sup> From this time down to 1760 a number of churches were built in urban as well as in rural areas.<sup>45</sup> Buchanan Hamilton while visiting the Chittagong town saw a Portuguese church in the town area.<sup>46</sup> He, however, did neither mention its denomination nor the exact place of its location. According to captain Pogson (1831), the Roman Catholic church of Chittagong was under the religious supervision of Srirampur church.<sup>47</sup>

W W Hunter mentions three church buildings in Chittagong town. These were the Roman Catholic cathedral near Firingi Bazar, the Roman Catholic chapel and the Protestant church. These churches provided both religious and educational services.

A sketch picture of the Roman Catholic church drawn in 1843 shows that the church complex contained an orphanage, a two storied brick built chapel, a parochial house (the bishop's office) and a boy's school.<sup>49</sup>

An old church of unknown denomination was located in the place now known as Puran Girja Lane, near Laldighi. Nothing remains of this church except the place name.

On December 24, 1839, the Anglican church (the Church of England) was built for prayer.<sup>50</sup> A few more churches were built in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

A Christian priest is called by the natives padri, a term derived from the Portuguese term padre meaning priest and clergyman. A marked trend in religious services in recent years is that the priesthood has been transferred to the natives. Conducting of worship and maintenance of discipline are the principal functions of a priest.

According to Christian faith, Sunday is Lord's Day and day of rest and worship. On Sundays they are gathered together in a church to worship God and to join the congregational singing of hymns.

**Way of living.** The social life of the Christians was regulated by the environment and doctrinal beliefs of the adherents.

Regarding the occupation of the upper class Christians, Hunter writes that in former time there were "extensive ship owners and wealthy men." According to Hunter, the native converts most of whom belonged to the lower class in the rural areas, were cultivators by profession. He writes that they "follow agricultural pursuits"<sup>51</sup>

Hunter and some other European writers refer to the practice of slavery by the wealthy Christians. According to Hunter, "even as late as the beginning of the present century (19th century) the Firingis possessed large number of slaves. The number of slaves often exceeded fifty in one family."<sup>52</sup>

On account of their ignorance of tenets of religion most of the lower class Christians do not live following the prescribed religious rituals. In fact, they constituted the backward part of the society. Referring to their backwardness Hunter regretfully

writes, "By neglect of education, the Firingis have allowed the natives to outstrip them."<sup>53</sup>

**Reform movements.** Two organizations during the British period worked among the Christian community to improve their social condition by making changes in their method of living. These are Church Missionary Society and the Bible Prachar Samiti. Church Missionary Society started their reforming activities in different districts of Bengal in the early part of the nineteenth century.

Bible Prachar Samiti established its branch in Chittagong. The aim of the association was to strengthen spiritual life by promoting religious activities among the people. Copies of the holy book were distributed among the people free of cost.

The activities of these two organizations have stimulated unity among the Christians.

**Festivals.** The observance of Christian festivals is marked by social gathering. The celebration of festivals occurs at regular interval. Christmas and Easter are the main Christian festivals.

Christmas is an annual public festival commemorating Jesus Christ's birth on Dec. 25. It is the most popular festival observed by all Christians with great religious fervour. The celebration is devoted to family reunion and merry making. A small tree, called Christmas tree is set up and hung with candles etc. Christmas carol (christian religious song) is attached to the observance of Christmas.

Easter is celebrated in remembrance of Christ's Resurrection. Lent, the period of 40 days before Easter is a season of special penitential observance.<sup>54</sup>

In spite of their small number, the Christians have remarkable influence on the society and culture of the people. The Christian missionaries devoted themselves to educational works. They established educational institutions for both boys and girls. They established charitable dispensaries, prominent

among which are located in Chandraghona and Harbang.

## B. Social Life

The structure of society in the beginning of the British rule was not of much different from earlier Mughal rule. In the latter part of the British rule variety of conditions brought fundamental changes in the structure of the society.

People according to social and economic position, were divided into four classes; upper class, upper middle class, lower middle class and commonalty.

**Upper class.** High government officers in the town and landlords in the rural areas comprised the uppermost class in the society.

The British government favoured aristocracy. The permanent settlement gave birth to a new land lord class. Their status was based primarily on the amount of property they held and the power they could exert. The titles of knighthood, Rai Bahadur, Rai Saheb, Khan Bahadur, Khan Saheb etc. were granted for individual achievements. This class of people formed the nobility section of the society.

Members of the legislature were given high status in the society.

Persons of distinction were called Babu in case of the Hindus and Buddhists, Saheb and Mia in case of the Muslims and Mr in case of the Christians and all other gentlemen. Bibi, Begam were some of the titles of distinction attached to the names of Muslim ladies.

**Higher middle class.** Teaching in higher educational institutions, practice of medicine and law, holding of high government jobs, management of banks and insurance companies, ownership of trading vessels and persons of importance led to the emergence of higher middle class among all the four communities.

Mahajan (great person) or creditor held important place

in his locality.

Lower middle class. This class consisted of independent farmers, traders, school teachers etc.

Common people, Cultivators, manufacturers of commodities of daily use, daily wage earners, boatmen, cart drivers etc. constituted the commonalty.

Most of the peasants found it difficult to acquire their own land since the land tenure system favoured land lordism. Throughout the year a cultivator kept himself busy in such works as preparing land, sewing plants and harvesting crops.

Interdependence among the common people helped to sustain their livelihood.

**Life style.** Clothing for either men or women constituted the casual and formal dress. Choga ("a dressing gown embroidered on the sleeves and shoulders")<sup>55</sup> and chapkan were chiefly worn by the upper class male folk on the occasions of public appearance and while attending the official darbar.

Shalwar kamij were outer garments wore by Muslim ladies on ceremonial or festive occasions. Embroidery works provided decorative details for the choga chapkan and shalwar kamij.

Chemise and chaya (woman's body undergarment) are originally Portuguese women's dress. These along with saree were being used by the upper class Hindu womenfolk.

In the nineteenth century dhuti panjabi for the Hindus and panjabi pyjama for the Muslims were garments of the civil aristocracy.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the male folk changed over to western clothing. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the design and type of clothing were modelled on European uniforms.

Costly dress and the use of jewellery undoubtedly improved appearance and heightened social position.

The most representative foods are rice, pulse, fish, egg, meat and vegetables. Rice is the primary staple food. Fish, pulse, bamboo shoots and vegetable curry are popular side dish. Both freshwater and marine fish is abundantly available in Chittagong.

The condiments used in cooking are salt, chilli, coriander seed, tamarind, dried red pepper, ginger, garlic, onion, cassia leaf etc. The material is fried with mastered oil, ghee, melted butter etc. All types of food are most delicious when these are deeply fried. Oil or similar other substance is poured into the pot so that it measures twice as deep as the thickness of the material. Many of the orthodox Hindus refrained themselves from taking onion and garlic. Hindu widows practice vegetarianism.

A sweet dish prepared by boiling rice in milk with sugar and other ingredients (paes) is a favourite delicious food. Some types of food especially rice cakes mixed with the juice or sap of the date palm is favourite common food during winter months.

A cook in a Muslim aristocratic household kitchen was known as baburchi who also served out meals.

It was customary to eat twice a day. Farmers and others who engaged themselves in physical labour ate three times daily. The midday meal was the main one.

During the 1930s, progressive persons took active interest in the cultivation of various types of western food crops and vegetables such as potato, tomato, lettuce, cabbage, cauliflower, parnip, spinach, celery (French bean) etc. were introduced in indigous cooking. Spicy foods such as polao biriani with fish, mutton and chicken were popular among the wealthy Muslims.

Farmers were satisfied by eating watered rice of previous night along with cooked dried fish and green chilli. Those who could not afford to purchase cooking oil, cooked dried fish by exposure to radiant heat.

During the 1930s in order to serve meals to the visitors, hotels and restaurants began to appear in Chittagong town. Some few hotels provided both lodging and meals for paying guests.

The dietary habits of the Chittagonians underwent a substantial change after World War II.

Pan is prepared with the combination of betel leaf, supari (areca nut), lime, elachi (cardamom), labanga (clove), karpur (camphor) etc. which is politely offered to guests and visitors and which intimates the termination of the visit.

Tobacco leaves used for smoking, chewing and as snuff were introduced by the Portuguese in the subcontinent towards the close of the sixteenth century. Since then smoking of tobacco has been popular among all classes of people. Among the upper class people hookah (or gargara) or a long pipe for smoking was very common. The hookah bearer was called hookah bardar, "the servant whose duty it was to attend to his master's hooka."<sup>56</sup> Among the masses tobacco "is placed with embers in a terra cotta chillum from which a reed carries the smoke into a coconut shell half full of water, and the smoke is drawn through a hole in the side, generally without any kind of mouthpiece, making a bubbling or gurgling sound." It was a common sight that the common people kept hooka in their house. Indigenous cigarettes (rolled in a tree leaf) are made from domestically grown tobacco and are called bidi. "Cigars truncated at both ends" were known as churut.

The practice of drinking tea was introduced as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century. Since that time drinking of tea has gradually been gaining popularity. Tea stalls sprang up along the major highways.

Narcotics like afim (opium), ganja, bhang etc. were taken by the people of all classes. People believed that narcotics in moderate doses relieve pain and produce profound sleep. Addiction to the practice of taking strong narcotics and drunk-

enness were the two vices of a section of upper class society.

The art of beautifying the feminine body consisted of hair oil, kajal (eye brow paint), surma (collyrium), alta (red dye to paint the borders of the feet), atar (fluid containing essence of flowers). All these cosmetic products were very much popular among the upper class ladies.

Fair skin was the foremost condition of beauty. In order to maintain a beautiful complexion woman of the past used green halud (tamarind), chandan (sandal wood paste), neem (margosa) to wash her face and body when taking a bath. The juice of lemon, water of wet masuri (lentil), cucumber, thin layer on milk were used as face lotion. All these items were used to improve a person's appearance.

The manufacture of tooth powder, body powder, scented hair oil, face cream, rouge, eye brow paint and other cosmetics replaced the older types of cosmetics in the post world war period.

Traditional furniture of an aristocratic house included such objects as screens, shelves, cabinets, writing desks, large size looking glass etc. The forms were usually simple. Changes and modifications have taken place with the introduction of British specimens. Screens were used to create privacy. Burmese wood made chests of many different shapes were mainly used to store coins and other valuables. Elaborately decorated chests were used to store sacred books, curios and valuable objects. Chairs especially arm chairs called kedara made of wood and cane were used on special occasions to entertain important persons. Sinduk made of Burmese teak was an oblong, legless chest that was used for storing clothing etc.

The main material used in making of furniture is wood and cane. The most frequently used woods were shegun, gamari, and jarul. Head with horns of different animals added lustre to the drawing rooms of an aristocratic family.

Dola, palki, tanjam etc. were chief means of transport

especially used by upper class people. Palki is a covered palanquin resting on long horizontal poles that were borne on the shoulders. Tanjam was "like a European sedan each pair of bearers bearing it by a stick between the poles to which the latter are slung."<sup>57</sup> Bearers of these carriages belonged to the poorer classes. High governmental officials and influential persons travelled on horse back.

Horse driven carriages gained growing popularity from 1920s. The covered coach pulled by one or two horses were common sights in city streets.

Bicycles and motor vehicles were introduced into the streets in the post world war period.

The most joyful observance in a family is marriage ceremony. Decisions about marriage were largely co-operative decisions. Often families would be involved for years in an on going discussion of the kind of spouse most suitable for a child. Private detectives were sometimes employed to find out details of the other family's reputation or history.

Jautuk or a dowry form an integral part of a marriage. Those may be in cash, property, ornaments, clothes and house hold goods. The girl's status in her husband's house is directly linked with the size of dowry she brings. In most cases the size of dowry is settled after negotiations between the parents of the couple to be. Almost every major festival is an occasion for the husband to expect gifts from his wife's parents. In the eighteenth and in the early part of the nineteenth century the jautuk system (pan pratha) assumed all characteristics of a market transaction. Since the middle of the nineteenth century there has been a mounting campaign against this evil custom.

When a bride married, she was marrying the husband's family. She was expectd to carry out the orders of the superior individuals. Motherhood and the careful nurturing of children were valued as supremely important in household life. Her nurturing task also included her husband and other relatives.

An ideal wife cared for her husband so that he would remain healthy and free of worry. Her responsibility was to take care of every member of the family. The housewives in the poorer class of society were treated much like a female attendant and were denied of health care and even sufficient food.

Prevalent custom vested the household head in a position of absolute authority over others.

Conventional sanctions, religious beliefs and imposition of institutions controlled the social life of an individual.

The most popular games in the rural areas were wrestling, swimming, hadoodoo, paraikhela, golladair, dandagooli, kite flying etc. Since the Swadeshi period wrestling, swimming and fighting with sticks have been the most lively sports especially among the youths. Swimming competition across the Karnafuli was periodically held during the Independence movement period. In Chittagong free style wrestling prevails. In this match two wrestlers (mallas or bolis) contend by grappling and attempting to throw one's opponent to the floor. The victor is awarded with medals as distinction for his performance. In Chittagong, the wrestling is known as Bolikhela which takes place in almost every village during winter season. The Bolikhela is often accompanied with mela or fair.<sup>58</sup>

The total round of annual festivals is too long to summarize here. Most of the festivals are related to religious events. The Eid of the Muslims, the Durga Puja of the Hindus, the Baisakhi Purnima of the Buddhists and the Christmas of the Christians are the principal festivals of the respective communities. People stop their work to celebrate the event. The festival is accompanied with family get together, better food, songs and music.

The year ending and the new year are the most important celebration of the year. Year ending festivals are held toward the end of Chaitra. Among the Hindu community the household and surroundings are thoroughly cleaned to sweep

out impurities of the outgoing year. The entrance and all objects of household are decorated with garlands of flowers and plants. All these indicate the renewal of life at the new year. Buddhists visit temples on this occasion. Hindus and tribesmen observe Bihu (>Bishuva, a Sanskrit word for vernal equinox) according to a particular custom. The year ending dish is a curry cooked with a number (at least twelve) of vegetables.

The new year's day is celebrated by family gatherings, visits to shrines or temples and formal calls on relatives and friends. Favourite food is prepared especially for this occasion.

#### **Note :**

- 1 Central National Muhammadan Association, *Fifth Annual Report*
- 2 Sufia Ahmed, *Muslim Community in Bengal* pp. 179-80
- 3 Wakil Ahmed, *Unish Shatake Bangali Musalmaner Chinta Chetanar Dhara*, p. 138
- 4 For details see *Al Islam*
- 5 The *Abhijan*, 1938
- 6 *Kayastha Darpan*. part 1, published by Sadhanpur Kayastha Sabha, Calcutta, 1322
- 7 The *Deshapriya*, 1345
- 8 The *Deshapriya*. Oct. 11, 1937, p. 18
- 9 Qt. Hunter, *op.cit.*, p. 149
- 10 The *Panchajanya*, Autumn Number, 1342, p. 102
- 11 The *Sevak*, Aswin, 1304
- 12 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 150
- 13 The *Mahila*, Bhadra, 1361
- 14 The *Sevak*. Kartik, 1304
- 15 S. B. Qanungo, *A History of Chittagong*, I, 490-91
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 Buchanan, p. 20
- 18 Qanungo, *op.cit.* pp. 102-03
- 19 Angkur, 1312-13
- 20 The *Deshapriya*, Jaistha, 1345. p. 25
- 21 Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 232-33
- 22 Hunter, *op.cit.*, p. 233
- 23 Buchanan, p. 68-69
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 92

25 The *Bouddha Bandhu*, 1313

26 Ven. Dharmavamsa Bhikkhu collected a copy of this text from Trilochan Chakma, the Dewan Bahadur of the Chakma chief. The Venerable Bhikkhu translated it into chaste Pali.

27 Buchanan, p. 91

28 Ibid., p. 91

29 Ibid., p. 108

30 Encyclopaedia Britannica

31 The *Bangla Gazette*, 1930

32 'Proceedings of the Chattagram Bouddha Maha Samiti, 1938,' qt. *Aggasar Jayanti*, pp. 55-60

33 The *Samgha Sakti*, Baisakh, 2483 Buddha Era, pp 438-456

34 The *Saptahik Kohinoor*, 1952

35 Official Report of the Bengal Legislative Council, 1939, p. 317

36 'Moor's Narratives', qt Hobson Jobson p. 354

37 Hunter, op.cit., p. 148

38 Ibid., p. 149

39 Buchanan, p. 123

40 Hobson Jobson, p.58

41 Ibid.

42 Qanungo, op.cit., p. 335-36

43 Hobson Jobson, p. 425

44 Qanungo, op.cit p. 223-24

45 Manrique, I, 276-77

46 Buchanan, p. 123

47 Pogson's Narratives, p. 51

48 Hunter, op.cit., VI, 148

49 BPP, X, pt. 1, 1915

50 The *Panchajanya*, Autumn Number 1342, pp 101, 143

51 Hunter, op.cit., p. 148

52 Ibid. pp. 148-149

53 Ibid., p. 149

54 For details, see Qanungo, op.cit, pp. 558-60

55 Hobson Jobson

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid

58 The *Prabasi*, 1322, pp. 353-356

## Chapter 6

### Urban Centres

Urban areas in Chittagong during the British period consisted chiefly of the towns of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar.

#### Chittagong Town

In the early period of the British rule Chittagong town was merely a corporate place made up of a number of densely populated villages connected with trading in goods. There are about half a dozen placenames ending in suffixes such as bazar and ganj (for example, Waliganj, Imamganj, Nanakganj, Rahamatganj, Katalganj, Kasim bazar, Lalkhan bazar, Dewan bazar, Enayet bazar, Firingi bazar etc.) in the city area which testify to their attachment to trade and commerce during the Mughal period.

Dr. Francis Buchanan Hamilton while visiting the Chittagong town in 1798 gives a description of the town as follows. "The town of Chittagong is very populous....It consists entirely of a number of scattered villages, occupying the narrow vallies, which separate the south end of the low hills running from Seetacoon (Sitakunda range) to the Kurrum Fullee (Karnafuli)."<sup>1</sup>

The natural scenery of the town of Chittagong delighted a reporter, who visited the town in the middle of the nineteenth century. He expresses his feeling in the following words; "...a succession of small round hills, planted with coffee, pepper, vines and bamboos, and surmounted by the villas of the English residents, give to the surrounding country an interesting and romantic appearance."<sup>2</sup>

At the time of the establishment of municipality, Chit'agong still retained much of its rural character. Hunter

writes, "Chittagong town itself is merely an agglomeration of small villages, grouped together for municipal purposes."<sup>3</sup>

In the beginning of the British rule there were only a few brick built houses in the town. Buchanan Hamilton, while visiting the town in 1798 saw the brick built houses of the magistrate, the collector, a commercial resident and a salt agent.<sup>4</sup> There were, however, some other brick built houses which had not been noticed by the traveller. These were (a) the residences of the people of high rank such as European officials, commercial residents, salt agents built generally on the top of hills, (b) the houses of the zamindars and influential town dwellers; (c) the Kutchery or government offices; (d) the joint buildings of the circuit house and the dak bungalow; (e) religious buildings.

**Creation of Chittagong Municipality.** According to the Act III, passed by the Bengal Council in 1863, it was proposed that a municipality should be established in Chittagong. On the authority of W W Hunter and L S S O'Malley, Chittagong Municipality started working in 1864. The Act also provided for civic affairs being run by a body of representatives.

**Municipality area.** Sources are not unanimous regarding the area covered by the municipality. The experimental census of 1869 shows the area of the town as 7.097 acres.<sup>5</sup> W W Hunter measures the area of the municipality as 9 sq. miles.<sup>6</sup> It is striking to note that the area of the municipality was getting smaller from that time. According to L S S O'Malley the area of the municipality was  $4\frac{1}{2}$  sq. miles.<sup>7</sup> Since that time the area of the municipality has been on increase. In 1936 the area of the municipality was 5.3702 sq. miles..<sup>8</sup>

**Population.** The census reports supply details about size, growth, density and regional distribution of population of the town.

According to Hunter, the first census of Chittagong municipality took place in 1869 on experimental basis. It gives the following demographic statistics. Muslims - 11,156,

Hindus - 3,479, Christians- 559, other denominations- 324. Total 15, 518 souls.

The regular census taken in January 1872 shows the grand total of the town's population as 20,604. But the published report of the census gives the number as 18,780.

The year of census taken and the total number of population furnished by the report are given below.

1881 - 20,969

1891 - 24,069

1909 - 22,140

1911 - 28,766

1921 - 36,030

1931 - 53,156

1947 - 2,30,000

One of the features of the town population during the period from the middle of the 19th century to the early part of the 20th century was that the number of male folk exceeded the female folk. According to 1872 census report, the male population of the town was 12,206 and the number of the females was 8,398. The cause of the predominance of male population in the town, according to W W Hunter, was the male folk who were employed in government services left their families in their own village home.<sup>9</sup>

It is worth noticing that 1901 census shows the unexpected decrease of the city's population. It was due to the cyclone of 1897 which took a heavy toll of human lives. In the latter part of 1930s the population of the town has increased considerably. This was due largely to the influx of the rural people into the town area.

**Administration.** Immediately after the creation of municipality, a Board of commissioners was formed and it was invested with administrative authority. The district magistrate was to act as the chairman of the Board of commissioners. The

erstwhile constituent villages was transformed into municipal wards (mahallas), which were given power to elect the commissioners.

The provincial government took necessary steps to increase the efficiency of the urban administration.

The Municipal Bill, 1883-84 carries great significance regarding the composition, powers and functions of the Municipal Board. The Bill provided that the tax payers would choose their representative to the Board. By this Act the size of the Municipal Board was made bigger. According to the District Gazetteer (1909), the Municipal Board of Chittagong town was consisted of 18 commissioners; only two commissioners were elected, others were nominated.

According to this Act, both the chairman and the vice-chairman of the municipality were to be elected by the commissioners. The vice-chairman, elected by the commissioners needed no approval of the government. Though the district magistrate ceased to be the ex-officio chairman of the municipality a great amount of power remained in his hand.

This Act undoubtedly gave the municipality a greater share of self government and civic responsibilities. In fact, the Municipal Act of 1884 remained the basis of municipal government in Bengal.

The Bengal Municipal Act of 1894 assigned greater responsibility to the Municipal Board with regard to the improvement of the health services. The Act recommended stern measures against the neglectful board of commissioners. It was clearly and firmly stated that if any municipality was found neglectful to the hygienic condition of the city dwellers then the government had the authority to dismiss the commissioners.

By this Act the property qualification of a voter was lowered to the minimum income of Rs 50 per month.

The municipality was given authority to appoint an audi-

tor and tax assessors. it was also empowered to organize fire brigade.<sup>10</sup>

The Bengal Municipal Act of 1896 takes important steps aiming at the improvement of aesthetic surroundings of an urban area. The municipality was given instructions to build playgrounds, open space, free libraries, veterinary hospitals etc.<sup>11</sup>

In 1918 the supervision of the urban functions was transferred from the provincial executive to the provincial legislative council.

The Bengal Municipal Act, 1934 extended the power of administrative authorities over municipal affairs.

The administration of Chittagong municipality was not wholly satisfactory. This was due to the poor methods of accounting and taxation. Collection of taxes was very much irregular. Moreover, a large number of people living in the town had their homes in nearby villages. They were reluctant to pay municipal taxes.

According to the government reports, financial stringencies, non co-operation of the tax payers, high cost of building materials, the expense of running the water works stood on the way of city's development.

In April, 1919, the municipality raised the rate of water tax. The house owners in many cases refused to fix water tap at their own cost.<sup>12</sup>

The differences of opinions among the municipal commissioners made it difficult to take necessary steps for the development works of the municipality. The administrative reporter writes, "There are said to be so many parties among the municipal commissioners that it is a difficult task to carry any measure through a meeting."<sup>13</sup>

In 1921-22 the government expresses dissatisfaction over the financial condition of the municipality due to non. realisation of municipal taxes.<sup>14</sup> In 1922-23 the financial condition of the

Chittagong municipality was unsatisfactory. A large amount of municipal taxes remained due, owing to laxity in collection.<sup>15</sup> In 1925-26 "the financial condition of the Chittagong municipality continues to be bad."<sup>16</sup> Next year the divisional commissioner advises the Municipal Board "to reorganise its finances."<sup>17</sup>

Chittagong municipality faced much financial crisis during the Second World War. To overcome wartime crisis government granted a small amount of money to the Chittagong municipality. According to the government report, "An advance of Rs 1,50,000 bearing interest at  $3\frac{3}{4}$  p. c. per annum was paid for the maintenance of the essential services of the municipality of Chittagong."<sup>18</sup>

**Public health.** Public health is the field of hygiene and sanitation dealing with the prevention of diseases, the promotion of health care by government agencies and improvement of drainage system.

The Chittagong municipality following its establishment was not clean enough to prevent the outbreak of epidemic diseases. The divisional commissioner in his annual report for the year 1874-75 writes, "There is no doubt that the town of Chittagong continues to deserve the evil reputation of being one of the most insalubrious spots in Bengal."<sup>19</sup>

The civil surgeon in his annual report for the year 1874-75 specified two causes of less salubrious urban area. First, the existence of the extensive low lying marshy lands. Second, the enormous number of tanks and stagnant pools that it contains."<sup>20</sup>

The provincial government adopted some important measures to protect the city dwellers from the danger arising from contaminants by enacting legislation. The Bengal Municipal Act of 1894 attaches great importance to the improvement of public health in urban areas.

The Bengal Municipal Sanitary Officers Act (Bengal Act II

of 1914) "enables Government to enforce the appointment of sanitary officers by municipalities and to determine the qualifications of those officers."<sup>21</sup>

Different classes of health officers were appointed to supervise the health condition of the people in the urban areas. The public health duties in the municipalities were carried out mainly by health officers, sanitary inspectors, assistant sanitary inspectors and vaccinators.<sup>22</sup> They were responsible for health care of the people ensuring the purity of water, milk etc., checking adulteration in food. They were required to take preventive measures to reduce serious outbreaks of diseases.

In 1936 a number of health associations known as 'Swaista Mangal Samiti' were organized chiefly by the youths in different parts of the city to make the city dwellers more health conscious. The youths visited people in their homes and rendered voluntary health services to the people of their localities.<sup>23</sup>

**Drainage system.** The town of Chittagong has good natural drainage system in the form of hill streams which flow in the direction in which the Karnaphuli flows.

The Sanitary Drainage Act, 1898 proposes to "facilitate the construction of Drainage Works for improving the sanitary condition."<sup>24</sup>

In 1940 the sanitary board proposed certain measures in order to improve the drainage system in the town so that no water in the drains was stagnating due to the construction of the water works. An ambitious project to construct pucca drains in the congested part of the town was also recommended.<sup>25</sup>

The Chaktai Khal is the principal drainage channel of the city. It was gradually being silted up by the town rubbishes flowed down into it. In 1927 Maulvi Syed Maqbul Husain, member of the legislative council urged the government to take immediate steps for the excavation of the Chaktai Khal.<sup>26</sup>

**Education.** The provincial government, the city government, the humanitarian organizations and the missionaries made efforts to impart formal education to the youths and children in the town area.

The Chittagong municipality subsidized one High English School, one labourers school (Shramik Vidyalaya), three tolls, nine madrasas and one Christian convent.<sup>27</sup> In 1935 the Chittagong municipality spent Rs 85, 797 on education.<sup>28</sup>

**Road and transport.** After the creation of the municipality a number of major roads in and around the town were either built or taken to hand for improvement.

According to W W Hunter, the road linking Chawkbazar and Anderkilla through Dewanbazar and Chandanpura was the oldest and the principal line of communication in Chittagong town. Other major roads were the Strand Road, Sadarghat Road, Kapasgola Road, town portion of Hathazari Road, Agrabad Road etc.

The improvement of transport condition of the Strand Road and Agrabad Road started in 1913 and 1914 respectively.<sup>29</sup>

The Municipal Board adopted "a resolution requesting the government to take over the maintenance of the main road (from Sadarghat to Kapasgola) of the town."<sup>30</sup> In 1939 Maulvi Nur Ahmad brought this resolution to the notice of the government.<sup>31</sup>

Most local movements within the town was on foot. Horse driven carts transported only the privileged section of the society. Ox driven carts transported goods. The introduction of bicycles and motor vehicles in the beginning of the twentieth century made a radical change in the transport system of the town.

**Water supply.** The construction of the water supply works at Dampara was started in 1915. It employed such advanced technology as Pattersons iron eliminating plant, Lancashire boilers etc. In 1916 Lord Carmichael, Lt. Governor

of Bengal inaugurated the water supply works.<sup>32</sup>

"A scheme for extension and improvement of water works at Chittagong was prepared by the public health department and has been submitted to the government in August, 1937 for administrative approval."<sup>33</sup>

In 1940 the scheme for remodelling of the Chittagong water works was undertaken by the authorities. The aim of this scheme was to increase the supply of drinking water in the town from four lack gallons of water to nine lack gallons a day by sinking additional tubewells, installation of pumping machinery on electric drive and by some other methods.<sup>34</sup>

**Electricity supply.** To provide the town dwellers with electricity some prominent citizens under the leadership of Karuna Sen formed an organization named Chittagong Engineering and Electric Supply Company. In 1924-25 the organization made a petition to the government to grant permit to the company for production of electricity.<sup>35</sup>

On March 27, 1927 chiefly by the initiative of Karuna Sen electricity was supplied to the town from Assam Bengal Railway Power House.<sup>36</sup>

In 1930 the petition of the citizens was granted by the government<sup>37</sup> to build a power plant to produce electricity and that could be operated by the municipality for its own consumption.

In 1937 the construction of the power house was completed and it began to supply electricity to the town.<sup>38</sup>

**Street lighting.** To illuminate the city streets electric lamps were introduced in 1927. The street lights, usually attached to tall poles were spaced at intervals along the major roads and streets.

In 1935 the Chittagong municipality increased its expenditure on lighting the streets and added 12 more electric street lights bringing the total number of electric lights in the town to 528.<sup>39</sup>

Public Library. The Bengal Municipal Act of 1896 asked the municipalities to establish public library along with free reading room where people could read or study. The Public Library of Chittagong has its origin in Buckland Ghat Library which was probably the oldest library in Chittagong. It was built mainly for the Europeans to read or to study. The library hall was located in Buckland Ghat, situated on the southern bank of the Laldighi. The ghat was named after C T Buckland who was magistrate of Chittagong from 1862 to 1864.

To meet the mounting demand of the enlightened public the municipality agreed to establish a public library in 1904. The Buckland Ghat Library and Reading Room authorities agreed to accomodate the proposed Public Library in their own buildings.

Chattal Prasun Library was established in 1317 B E at Calcutta.<sup>40</sup> In subsequent times (probably in 1914) the library merged with Chittagong Public Library. Books and furniture were brought to Chittagong chiefly by the initiative of Tripura Charan Chowdhury.

The acquisition of the collection of books of the Buckland Ghat Library and the Chattal Prasun Library enriched the Public Library and made it one of the valuable Libraries of the province.

The Public Library started its functions in January, 1905. The district magistrate was its chairman and the first secretary was Bipin Chandra Guha.

Sometime in 1930s Chittagong municipality took over the charge of the Public Library. it was decided that the chairman of the municipality should also be the ex-officio chairman of the Public Library committee. In 1935 the secretary was Jogendra Chandra Guha, the vice-chairman of the Chittagong municipality.<sup>41</sup>

The private collection of books of such eminent persons as poet Jibendra Kumar Dutta, poet Shasanka Mohan Sen, poet

Nabin Chandra Das, poet Rajani Ranjan Sen were donated to the library. The Chattagram Sahitya Parishad Library was housed at the Public Library buildings. Sometime in 1940s the Parishad Library was amalgamated with the Public Library.

The Public Library contains a wide range of materials including government papers, old journals and pamphlets. It has an excellent collection of rare books. The library is open to the public as a reference library.

**Town Hall (J M Sen Hall).** From the middle of the nineteenth century there was a pressing public demand for a building for the purpose of public meetings. Poet Nabin Chandra Sen while he was the deputy magistrate in Chittagong made an effort to construct a town hall and Roy Prasanna Kumar Rai Bahadur agreed to provide monetary assistance for the construction of the proposed town hall. The project, however, was not materialized owing to some problems.<sup>42</sup>

On January 25, 1914 Jatra Mohan Sen, a prominent social worker and a politician, purchased a quantity of land needed for the construction of the proposed town hall. He also borrowed an amount of money on his own account for this purpose.

On March 26, 1915 the Town Hall Building Committee consisting of notable persons was formed. Tripura Charan Chowdhury on behalf of the Chittagong Association took the responsibility of raising funds for the construction.

On November 19, 1916, the foundation stone was laid by Rai Sarat Chandra Das Bahadur, a scholar of international repute. Rajani Kanta Hore a renowned contractor took the charge of its construction.

On February 5, 1920 Rai Nabin Chandra Dutta Bahadur inaugurated the town hall.<sup>43</sup> Since then the management of the town hall has been entrusted to the Chittagong Association.

The Chittagong Association named the town hall Jatra Mohan Sen Hall to commemorate the illustrious life of the great

leader.<sup>44</sup>

Throughout the Independence movement period the town hall served as a forum for public speeches and debates on political and social issues. Prominent politicians made public addresses and patriots delivered fiery speeches before freedom loving gathering.

Besides the political meetings, reception meetings, literary meetings, anniversary meetings, condolence meetings and cultural functions are regularly being held in the town hall.

**Muslim Institute.** The Muslim community of Chittagong town felt the need of a building where people could meet for literary and political purposes. To achieve this aim an assembly hall was proposed to be constructed and it would be named Muslim Institute.

**Maulvi Nur Ahmad**, chairman of the municipality while praying grant of a sum of money for the construction of the Muslim Institute to the government gives the following details in the legislative council regarding the background of the intended construction of the institute as follows :

A representation for a capital grant of Rs 30,000 was submitted to government through Mr. A Momin the then Commissioner, Chittagong Division in 1930 for establishing an institution to be called the Muslim Institute at Chittagong. Recently a mass meeting of the leading Muslims was held in Chittagong and that copies of the resolution passed in the same were sent to the Chief Minister under the signature of Khan Bahadur Maulvi Abdus Sattar with a request to make an early contribution of Rs 35,000 for the construction of the proposed Muslim Institute.

In reply, Mr A K Fazlul Haque informed the Hon'ble member that the matter was under consideration of the government.<sup>45</sup>

There were some other minor buildings which were used for gathering, discussion meetings, exhibition of handicraft and

other public business. Among these buildings the following two are important.

**Oldham Institute.** It was primarily meant for public meetings, particularly related to humanitarian works. In 1937 its secretary was Sunitibhushan Sen.

**Chittagong Institute.** It was established by a group of elite for the purpose of social works. In 1913 Roy Upendra Lal Bahadur and Mr. J K Ghoshal were its president and secretary respectively. They held their posts till 1937.

**Residential quarters.** Chawk Bazar is the oldest part of the town. During the Mughal and the early British period, the ruling class and the aristocratic section lived in Chawk Bazar area.

The placenames suffixed to tola, tuli, patti, sahar, abad etc. suggest the extent of residential areas of the town during early British period. (For example Mogaltuli, Pathantuli, Telipatli Halishahar, Sholashahar, Agrabad, Ashkarabad etc.)

The part of the town covered by Chawkbazar, Chandanpura, Dewan bazar was the most densely populated area, characterized by tightly clustered houses.

Since the seventeenth century Patharghata - Firingi Bazar area has been the principal place of the Christian settlements.

Muslim settled areas could be found in every part of the town. Their chief concentrations were Bakalia, Muradpur, Khulsi, Madarbari, Pathantuli, Alqaran etc.

From the beginning of the British rule changes appeared in the pattern of residential areas of the town. The residential quarters of the European officials were built on hill tops. W W Hunter writes, "The houses occupied by the European officials and their families are scattered over a considerable area, and each house is on a separate hill."<sup>46</sup>...

During the British period, small residential neighbourhoods grew up in different parts of the town. These areas were chiefly occupied by the middle class native elite.

Some of these areas were Rahmatganj, Nandan Kanan, Ghat Farhad Beg etc. In these places men of social and political distinctions and high professionals of the Hindu community built their own houses.

The growth of city population during the latter part of the British rule required new places for living accomodation. Vacant lands and under developed areas were gradually made fit for habitation. Such kind of places were Lal Khan Bazar, Nandan kanan, Muradpur, Dewanhat etc. Since that time the process of improvement of the poor parts of the town is going on chiefly by the private individuals.

During the latter part of the British rule Andarkillah area became the main part of the town. Bakhsirhat, Khatunganj, Asadganj, Chaktai became densely populated areas on account of the location of whole sale and retail sale markets. Labourer class and the poorer section of the society lived in the rough part of the town.

**Markets.** Some places in the town were kept reserved for buying and selling goods. These places were called bazars and mandis. Chawkbazar was the principal market of the town. Chaktai-Khatunganj was an important business centre where buying and selling of commodities took place in large quantities. Tamakumandi (incorporated with modern Reazuddin Bazar) and Firingi Bazar were two other important markets. Since the nineteenth century Bakhsir hat has been an important seat of trade.

All these markets were set up in open spaces. Officials were appointed to supervise the running of the markets and to regulate the prices of articles.

**Warehouses.** Every port town has its own warehouses. In the beginning of the British period goods intended for import and export trade were stored in warehouses or godowns called gudams and golas. Golas were built in different places of the town. Such place names as Kapasgola, Saltgola etc. survive the traces of the warehouses that have existed during the early British period.

### Associations, Clubs and Recreation centres

In the town two clubs were organized after English models. These were Chittagong Club and Pahartali European Club. Membership of these two clubs was restricted to the Europeans. These clubs were meant to foster sociability and contacts among the professionals and businessmen in Chittagong.

Chittagong Club was a social club, organized by the Europeans for eating, drinking, conversation and recreation. Persons of high society joined this club. The club furnished a ball-room where the members danced with their partners in evening parties. They usually had beverage or drink in order to develop acquaintanceship. In 1936 the secretary of the Chittagong Club was Captain Aiyers.

Pahartali European Club was in fact an association of European peoples for pleasure and co-operation.

The BOC Club was a specialized club organized by the employees of Burma Oil Company. Mr L M Crossfield, the manager of the BOC and the elected member of the provincial legislative council (1936) was its patron. The club organized cultural functions which won high praise from the audience and much approbation of the press.

Assam Bengal Railway Indian Institute was in fact a literary association grew out of the occasional meetings of literary men. It was founded by the employees of Assam Bengal Railway in a hired house in 1900. The management of the Institute was financed chiefly by the Railway authorities and partly by the subscription of the members.

Shortly afterwards, the Institute constructed its own building. It housed a library room and a conference room. The library won fame for its valuable collection of Bengali and English works.

The Institute was well known for the performance of cultural functions. Musical entertainment, recitation,

speeches, reading of self composed articles and poems, staging of dramas were regularly held. The Institute published, a quarterly literary magazine named the 'Anjali'.<sup>47</sup>

**Movie theater.** Movies or motion pictures became the popular entertainment in the latter part of the 1920s. Cinema Palace, the first movie hall was established in 1929 by Art Theatre Company in Lyall Road.<sup>48</sup> Shortly after, Lotus Cinema was established by a rich individual in 1929. In the early 1930s silent pictures were shown. In the mid 1930s talkie machineries were replaced by cinematography.

There were two more cinema halls in which movies were regularly being shown. These were Jubilee Cinema (est. 1936) on Jatindra Mohan Avenue and Lion Cinema on Sadarghat Road. The most popular cinema shows in the late 1930s and in the early 1940s were Chand Sadagar, Chandidas, Krishna Sudama, Daksha Jajna, Devdas, Manmoyee Girls School, Mane na mana etc.

**Sports, games and playgrounds.** By the Bengal Municipal Act, 1896 the municipalities were given instructions to build playgrounds. In Chittagong no open play ground where the teams of sportsmen could play was built till 1930s. There were, however, innumerable number of small fields in the town area where youths freely engaged in playing games.

An important step in increasing the sportsmanship among the youths was the establishment of Chittagong Athletic Club in 1938. Chairman Nur Ahmad, Rafiq Ahmad Siddiqi, Barrister Anwarul Azim, Mahim Chandra Das were its members.<sup>49</sup>

For centuries wrestling has been a source of entertainment among the people interested in sport. Among the wrestling matches Abdul Jabbar's Bolikhela is noted for its widespread popularity. It is thought to have originated during the Swadeshi movement. The event takes place on the 13th Baisakh every year in the Laldighi Maidan. Bolis or wrestlers from all corners of the district join the match to win prize.

The event is accompanied with shows and entertainments. According to news report, on the thirteenth Baisakh 1322 (1915) more than five thousand spectators gathered to witness the match.<sup>50</sup> On the 25th April, 1938 about 15,000 people assembled to enjoy the Bolikhela.<sup>51</sup>

Boat racing on the river Karnaphuli has been a favourite game since the Swadeshi period. The event takes place annually. On September 14, 1929, a number of country made rowing boats took part in this race which occurred with a strong feeling of excitement. The divisional commissioner with his wife, the district magistrate with his wife and other high officials witnessed the game. Oli Meah finished first. The wife of the district magistrate distributed prizes to the competitors.<sup>52</sup>

### Parks and gardens

Chittagong town during the British rule was renowned for the existence of a large number of parks, reservoirs and open spaces. Pieces of land in the town area were kept reserved where people used to go to walk and to relax. During the British period following two parks deserve to be noticed.

(a) Hands Park. This public park was named after the Collector Mr. Hands. This was situated near the museum and the Inspector's office. At present this park can be located to the north of Muslim Institute.

(b) Victoria Garden. This triangular shaped garden was situated in the foothills of the Fairy Hill. This greenery was named after Queen Victoria. A work of bust sculpture of the queen was installed in this garden. In 1940s the sculpture was removed. At present the place is occupied by a petrol pump station.

**Open space.** Wide open spaces in different parts of the town were available for different purposes. Some of these open spaces are mentioned below.

(a) Gandhi Maidan. This open space was situated in the north of the Rangmahal Hill (General Hospital Hill). The

maidan has been named after Mahatma Gandhi who delivered his memorable speech in this open space during Non Co-Operation Khilafat Movement.

(b) Municipal Maidan. The open space stretched out between the foot hills of the Fairy Hill and the Laldighi was known as Municipal Maidan. When a road stretching north to south was constructed, the maidan was divided into two parts. The eastern portion was given to the Muslim High School to be used as a playground. Later on it was converted to Laldighi Maidan.

(c) Nizamat Paltan Ground. It was situated in the foothills of Railway Hospital Hills.

(d) Parade Ground. This open space of important urban heritage was in former times used for inspection of troops. After the creation of police and military cantonments the Parade Ground lost much of its military character.

Chairman Nur Ahmad on behalf of the city dwellers demanded to hand the parade ground over to the Municipality." The government, however, did not comply with his request.<sup>53</sup> Protest meetings were held in the parade ground throughout the Independence movement period. Besides the patriotic meetings, political and social assemblages were also held in the Parade ground.

(e) Race course. Polo ground. Horse racing was a favourite sport of the Europeans. In this sport horses with riders race against each other. Horse racing was often accompanied with a bet on the horses. The polo game is played by two teams on horse back.

(f) Cricket ground. It was situated in the modern stadium ground. The cricket was played on grass by two teams. Almost all the cricket players were Europeans.

The Bengal Municipal Act of 1896 directed the municipalities to make provisions of aesthetic establishments for the city dwellers. With this end in view a museum was established in 1930s somewhere near Hands Park and school

inspector's office.

Some places of the town having natural beauty were given special attention.

**Hill resorts.** There are a number of hills which are pleasant to look at. A lot of people go to these hills especially at afternoon to enjoy the sight seeing. Within the town some of the attractive hills are as follows.

Fairy Hill (hill of fairies or hill of enchantment) is the highest hill in the town. From the top of the hill the whole of the town, river Karnaphuli and many other objects can be seen by bare eyes.

Tempest Hill is situated adjacent to the Fairy Hill.

Rangmahal Hill is situated near Anderkilla.

Golpahar Hills (Pravartak Hills). This range of rolling hills was the most beautiful spot renowned for its natural scenery. Climbing the hill tops and walking on the hill slopes were enjoyable experiences.

**Lakes and reservoirs.** There are some lakes and reservoirs which give the visitors great pleasure.

Lal Dighi. This is the natural reservoir of fresh water. During the Arakanese period (1570-1666) it was the principal reservoir of water used by the garrisoning army. During the subsequent Mughal period it retained its importance as the principal source of fresh water. In the middle of the nineteenth century Lal Dighi was given a beautiful shape. The inner sides of the dighi were paved with brick. Two ghats or flight of stairs were built on two sides of the dighi. One was Ricketts Ghat named after the district magistrate Sir Henry Ricketts (1841-48). Another was Buckland Ghat named after the district magistrate C T Buckland (1862-64).

Foy's lake. This natural reservoir was intended particularly for the purpose of the railway workshop. A dam was constructed on a stream under the supervision of Mr. Foy to give a shape of reservoir. Since that time it has been named Foy's lake. It is the most beautiful natural spot in the city. It

attracts a large number of visitors especially on holidays.

Pahartali lake. Originally a marshyland the area was excavated and converted to an artificial lake.

Askar Khan's dighi. This reservoir has two hills on two sides which lend it a pleasant look.

Seaside resorts. Sea beaches near the town are located at the sloping surface between the foothills and the landward limit of the ocean waves. The government located two coastal areas featuring excellent sea beach for recreational purposes.

(a) Seaside resort at Minamuttee. It was built on the side of a hill overlooking the ocean.

(b) Seaside resort at Parkee. This broad sandy beach between the hills and the sea is noted for its scenic beauty.

These two sea beaches were much liked by the Europeans either to have a sunbath or to take a water bath in sea water. To go to the sea beach on holidays was a pleasurable experience to a person visiting the places. The sea breeze was thought to be good for the health.

River bank or Strand Road. The shore of the river Karnafuli from Sadarghat to Patenga was once noted for walking and driving.

The rate of progress of urbanization of Chittagong town on modern line after the First World War was praiseworthy. In the beginning of the nineteen forties Chittagong became the third largest urban area in the province. The city and its environs undoubtedly gives the inhabitants of the district a feeling of pride.

Chittagong town suffered most during the Second World War. The Japanese bomb attack led the government to take hasty measures. Chittagong town was declared "a non-family area" i.e., unfit for living with family members. All the educational institutions and big buildings were requisitioned for military purposes. The city life returned to normalcy after the world war was over.

## Cox's Bazar

Before 1798 Cox's Bazar was an obscure place. Rennell's map does not insert any habited place in this area. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton while visiting the area in 1797 does not mention anything about human habitation in or near Cox's Bazar.

After the Burmese occupation of Arakan in 1786 thousands of Arakanese fled to southern Chittagong to escape political persecution.

The Arakanese refugees could not settle permanently anywhere owing to the continuous Arakanese incursions into southern Chittagong. They lived in scattered hamlets spreading all over southern Chittagong. The British government made arrangements to assemble the Rakhaings in one place. Mr. H J S Cotton writes, "Towards the close of the century (18th) the number (of the Arakanese immigrants) was found to be so great as to demand special arrangements for their settlement."<sup>54</sup> The British Government in 1798 "selected a tract of wasteland as a convenient spot for the houses of the new Mugg (Rakhaing) colony."<sup>55</sup> The execution of the project was entrusted to Captain Hiram Cox. Rent free lands were granted to the settlers. "Since which time the inhabitants have enjoyed it rent free, each person occupying his house as his own property."<sup>56</sup> The laborious task of relief works exhausted Mr. Cox's energy and accounted for his premature death. He was the founder of the township of Cox's Bazar. "He has left his name to the place now called Cox's Bazar."<sup>57</sup>

In spite of continued Burmese military incursions into southern Chittagong the Rakhaing settlement in Cox's Bazar continued to be thriving. Within a short time Cox's Bazar grew up to township. In 1817 the district magistrate Mr. Paul William Peehall writes, "Cox's Bazar is a large town upwards of a mile in length, situated on a spot of sand about (at the utmost) a quarter of a mile broad between the north and of the hills called the White Cliffs and the river Bag Colly (Bak-khali). This town.... is entirely full of houses."<sup>58</sup> Occasional incursions

of Burmese troops into southern Chittagong render it necessary to build enclosures on all sides and to establish military posts to make the township safe from attack.<sup>59</sup>

After the Burmese war was over the township of Cox's Bazar underwent a rapid growth. A number of kiyangs (places of worship) were built in different parts of the town. Residential quarters of the well to do families gave the township a pleasant look. Referring to the pleasant surroundings of Cox's Bazar township in the middle of the 19th century W W Hunter writes.

Cox Bazar is a thriving and important place. In appearance it differs altogether from a Bengal town. The places of worship and the rest houses of the Maghs are well and solidly built, and 'some of the houses of the well to do residents are not only substantial, but very picturesque and neatly ornamented'. The houses are built entirely of timber, raised on piles, after the Burmese fashion, and with their surrounding verandahs and decorated gable ends, the whole presents an appearance not unlike that of a Swiss cottage.<sup>60</sup>

In the view of Hunter the environment of Cox's Bazar was better than that of Chittagong.<sup>61</sup>

By the Act VI of Bengal Council passed in 1868 it was proposed that a municipality should be established in Cox's Bazar. Accordingly, the Cox's Bazar Municipality was created in 1869. The administrative activities in order to run the municipality started this year.

In 1869 the total number of the commissioners of Cox's Bazar Municipal Board was 13 and none of them was elected.<sup>62</sup> The election system had not been introduced till 1911. According to O'malley ten commissioners were nominated while three were ex-officio members of the Board.<sup>63</sup>

According to the District Gazetteer (1909), the area of the Cox's Bazar Municipality was  $1\frac{1}{2}$  sq. miles.

Throughout the 19th century, Cox's Bazar was overwhelmingly a Rakhaing dominated town. According to 1872, census report the town population consisted of 3,205 Maghs (Rakhaings),

831 Muhammadans, 244 Hindus.<sup>64</sup>

The census reports give the official number of the Cox's Bazar town population as follows :

1872 .....	4280
1881 .....	4363
1891 .....	4347
1901 .....	3845
1911 .....	4632
1931 .....	5018

The decrease of the town population in 1901 was due to the devastating cyclone and tidal bore occurred in 1897 which took heavy toll of human lives.

#### Note :

- 1 Buchanan, p. 123
- 2 Edward Thornton, *A Gazetteer of the Territories under the Government of the East India Company*, 1858, p. 207
- 3 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 150
- 4 Buchanan, p. 123
- 5 Qt. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 150
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 O'Malley, *op.cit.*
- 8 The *Panchajanya, Autumn Number*, 1936, p. 121
- 9 Hunter, *op.cit.*, p. 151
- 10 Buckland, *op. cit.*, II, 959-60
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 976
- 12 RAB, 1918-19, p. 46
- 13 *Ibid.*, 1920-21, p. 46
- 14 *Ibid.*, 1922-23, p. 44
- 15 *Ibid.*, 1923-24, p. 43
- 16 *Ibid.*, 1925-26, p. 48
- 17 *Ibid.*, 1926-27, p. 121
- 18 ORBLC, 1943, p. 397
- 19 Qt. Hunter, *op.cit.*, p. 150
- 20 Qt. Hunter, *op.cit.*, pp 150-51
- 21 RAB, 1913-14, p. XX
- 22 Bengal Public Health Report, 1941, p. 8
- 23 The Purabi, 1343
- 24 Buckland, *op. cit.*, II, 939

25 *Annual Report of the Chief Engineer*, Public Health Department, 1940, p. 6

26 *ORBLC*, 1928, p. 196

27 'Proceedings of the Chittagong Municipality', qt. *Bangla Gazette*, 1929

28 *ORBLC*, 1941, pp 426-27

29 *RAB*, 1913-14, p. 82

30 *Ibid.*, 1925-26, p. 48

31 *ORBLC*, 1939, p. 763

32 *Annual Report of the Chief Engineer*, Public Health Department, 1934

33 *ORBLC*, 1939, p. 146

34 *Annual Report of the Chief Engineer*, Public Health Department, 1940, p. 6

35 *RAB*, 1924-25, p. 142

36 *The Satyabarta*, 1344, p. 51

37 *RAB*, 1930-31, p. 176

38 *The Panchajanya, Autumn Number*, 1344 (1937) p. 130

39 *RAB*, 1935-36, pp 93-94

40 *Education Gazette*, Kartick 11, 1317

41 *The Jugadharma*, 1935, pp. 6-7, the *Panchajanya*, 1936

42 See the poet's autobiography

43 *The Jugadharma*, July, 1935, p. 7

44 *The Sadhana*, Jaistha, 1327, pp 72-73

45 *ORBLC*, 1941, p. 2

46 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 150

47 *The Anjali*, No. 3, 1340, p. 192

48 *The Dainik Jyoti*, 1929

49 *The Deshapriya*, June, 1938, p. 21

50 *The Prabasi*, 1322, pp. 353-56

51 *The Deshapriya*, May, 1938, p. 27

52 *The Bangla Gazette*, 1929

53 *ORBLC*, 1939, p. 432

54 *Memorandum*, p. 227

55 *Ibid.*

56 Mr Paul William Pechall, magistrate of Chittagong to govenrment, dt. Nov. 26. qt. *Memorandum*, p. 227

57 *Memorandum*, p. 227

58 Qt. *Ibid*

59 *Ibid.*

60 Hunter, *op cit.*, p. 152

61 *Ibid.*

62 Hunter, *op.cit.*

63 *District Gazetteer, Chittagong*

64 Hunter, *op.cit.*, p. 152

## Chapter 7

### Political Parties

In modern sense a political party is a group of people organized to advocate political ideologies and to promote political activities among the masses. Generally, the progressive section of the communities organize political parties and exercise control over political activities.

Unfortunately, not much information is available regarding the activities related to the political parties in Chittagong during the British period. There was no proper system of maintenance and preservation of the official records of the activities of the political parties. The meagre references to the activities of the political parties and speeches of the political leaders published in some books and newspapers are the chief sources of our study.

The Chittagong Association founded in 1875 initiated the political activities in the district. It dealt with public affairs, advised the government on vital matters, and criticised the government for its authoritative exercise of power. In later times, almost all the members of the Chittagong Association joined the district Congress Party.

**The Congress Party.** English System of party organization came into being with the creation of Indian National Congress in 1886. From the very beginning, nationalism, democratization of government and secularism have been the foundation of the Congress Party.

Article IV of the constitution of the Congress Party, passed in 1904 provided for the formation of the district Congress committees and the subdivisional Congress committees. It may be assumed that in this year Chittagong District Congress committee was established.

Jatra Mohan Sengupta, the leading politician of the district was elected president of the district Congress committee. From that time down to his death in 1919 he remained the head of the district Congress committee. Mahim Chandra Das was appointed secretary to deal with the official business. Other prominent members of the Congress Party were Tripura Charan Chowdhury, Jamini Kanta Sen, Prasanna Kumar Roy, Prasanna Kumar Sen, Ramesh Raksit etc. Some of them were members of the district Congress committee.

After the formation of the Congress Party the leaders engaged themselves in spreading party ideology among the people. The chief spokesman papers of the Congress Party were the 'Jyoti' and the 'Panchajanya'.

From the beginning, the Swadeshi ideas and Bengal Nationalism became the political creed of the Congress Party. In this connection, the Congress played a leading role in mobilizing the public opinion against the partition of Bengal.

Youths played a vital role in the party organization. Youths from all corners of the district joined the Congress Party as volunteers. The corps of volunteers was known as Congress Seva Dal which played an important role in shaping the party activities.

On October 15, 1905 partition of Bengal was carried into effect. The district Congress undertook the task of conducting the Anti Partition movement and of directing the course of action.

Throughout the period of the Swadeshi movement a number of Congress Swadeshi leaders visited to Chittagong and in public meetings they delivered fiery speeches against partition of Bengal. Their speeches aroused public emotion of loving of motherland.

The first provincial conference after the annulment of the Partition was held in Chittagong on the 6th and the 7th April, 1912. It was a great event in the history of the district

Congress. The conference was presided over by Barrister A Rasul a staunch supporter of Swadeshi movement. The conference was attended by a large number of All Bengal Congress leaders such as Surendra Nath Banarji, Ambika Charan Majumdar, Pran Krishna Acharjee, Aswini Kumar Dutta, Byomkesh Chakravorti etc.

The Home Rule League, established in 1916 gave birth to the self government movement in 1917. The district Congress joined the Home Rule movement and publicly declared that the people have a right to control the government of the country by its own people.

The Montague Chelmsford Reform Bill did satisfy neither the Congress nor the Indians. To express their dissatisfaction the Congress Party leaders organized protest meetings everywhere in the province.

To stop the organization of public meetings the government promulgated a law, called Rowlatt Act, the breach of which would lead to the arrest of the disobedients.

To express strong protest against the government's unfair treatment a large number of agitators gathered in the field of Jalianwallabagh. To disperse the gathering the police started firing on the crowd, as a result of which thousands of people were either killed or wounded. This cruel action made the whole nation aggrieved with deep pain.

Condemning the Rowlatt Act and the Jalianwallabagh massacre Jatra Mohan Sengupta gave his memorable presidential speech in the Bengal provincial conference held in Mymensingh in 1919. He branded the British rule as the rule of terrorism.

The death of Jatra Mohan Sengupta on Nov. 2, 1919 was a great loss to the Congress Party. His able leadership guided the people towards the freedom movement.

In 1921 Jatindra Mohan Sengupta and Mahim Chandra Das were elected president and secretary respectively of the

district Congress committee. The Congress committee under the competent guidance of Jatindra Mohan Sengupta took the responsibility of conducting the Non-Cooperation movement.

On June 3, 1921, eminent Congress leader C F Andrews came to Chittagong to plead for the doctrine of nonviolent non cooperation movement.

Jatindra Mohan Sengupta accompanied with the Congress leaders started mass agitation against the authoritative rule of the British government. The agitators disobeyed the restrictive laws imposed on public meetings. A large number of Congress leaders including J M Sengupta, Mahim Chandra Das, Tripura Charan Chowdhury, Ramesh Chandra Raksit, Moksada Ranjan Kanungo, Jamini Mohan Basu, Ratneswar Chakravorti, Nripen Banarji were arrested by the authorities on ground of disobeying the government orders. Throughout the Non Co-operation movement the Congress Party kept in close touch with the common people.

Mahatma Gandhi accompanied with Maulana Mohammad Ali came to Chittagong on August 31, 1921 to preach and expound the doctrine of Satyagraha and Khilafat ideology.

In May, 1922, the Bengal provincial political conference was held in Chittagong. Jatindra Mohan Sengupta, president of the reception committee took special care of the management of the conference. Chittaranjan Das was designated to preside over the conference. By this time he was sentenced to imprisonment. His wife Basanti Devi was nominated president of the conference which was held in the parade ground.

On January 1, 1923 Chittaranjan Das founded the Swarajya Party. A large number of Congressides joined the Swarajya Party. Chittaranjan Das was the president and Jatindra Mohan Sengupta was the deputy leader of the Swarajya Party.

In 1924 Jatindra Mohan Sengupta was elected president of the Bengal provincial Congress Committee. Next year he

became president of the Swarajya Party after the death of Chittaranjan Das. Under his skilful leadership both the Congress and the Swarajya worked on common ground inspite of difference of opinion between the two parties.

On May 12, 1925 Gandhiji visited to Chittagong for the second time. The purpose of his visit was to review the trend of changing politics. He laid stress on the unity of the Congress party.

Towards the end of the 1920s extremism rose to a very great degree in the Congress Party.

The growth of extremism became apparent in the Calcutta session of the Congress held in 1928. A large delegation headed by Surya Kumar Sen attended the meeting.

The rivalry between Jatindra Mohan Sen Gupta and Subhas Chandra Bose for leadership of the Congress Party reached its climax in the year 1929. In Chittagong Subhas Bose Surya Sen alliance gained dominance on the political activities of the Congress.

The conference of Chittagong district Congress committee held in 1929 carried with it great importance to the organizational structure of the party. It marked the dominance of the extremist group. The whole conference was divided into four sessions : (1) district Congress working committee's meeting, (2) district youth conference, (3) district students conference, and (4) district women conference. The conference as a whole was presided over by Subhash Chandra Bose.

In all these meetings the extremist group under the leadership of Surya Kumar Sen appeared to be in the lead. Medical practitioner Mahim Chandra Dasgupta was nominated president of the district Congress committee. Surya Sen had already been nominated general secretary.

The conference was followed by the outbreak of factional disturbances in which a number of people were injured.

In January, 1930, the Congress called for civil disobedience movement. The leaders addressed the people to break government laws everywhere and on every occasion. On the 6th April Congress satyagrahis proceeded to disobey the Salt Law. In Chittagong Mahim Chandra Das conducted the salt satyagraha.

The civil disobedience encouraged the extremists to increase their acts of violence. The extremist group of Chittagong rose in rebellion against the British government in 1930. The revolt involved raids on military establishments and fight against British armed forces over a period of four years.<sup>1</sup>

All kinds of activities of the political parties were prohibited by the government during the period of civil disobedience. As a result the political activities of the Congress Party were suspended during the period.

Deshapriya Jatindra Mohan Sengupta died of heart attack on July 22, 1933. His political ideology, his organizational ability, his unique role in the Independence movement will be remembered for all future time.

After the enactment of 1935 Act, government prohibitions on political activities were gradually becoming less strict. The Congress, however, fell into division. A large number of Congressmen especially the extremists left the party and joined the Communist Party. Most of the leftist members of the Congress formed a faction named Congress Socialist Party.<sup>2</sup>

The All Bengal Congress Socialist Party was formed in 1934 as a left wing organization within the Congress. This party was critical of traditional political strategy and ideology of the Congress. Their programme included transfer of power to the masses, state planning and ownership, elimination of the privileged class, redistribution of land to the peasants, and the establishment of co-operatives and collectivization.<sup>3</sup> Amar Prasad Chakravorti a detenu was one of the leading organizers of this party in Chittagong.

In 1936 the district Congress committee was reorganized. Mahim Chandra Das was nominated district Congress president, Tripura Charan Chowdhury was nominated vice-president and Golam Sobhan was nominated general secretary.

Under the auspices of the district Congress committee local committees were formed.

The Chittagong city Congress committee took a shape for the first time in the middle of the 1930s. Mohammad Lokman Khan Sherwani was elected president of the Chittagong city Congress committee (probably in 1937)

In order to extend the party ideology in the rural areas and to make the local leaders increasingly involved in the party activities, the subdivisional branches of the Congress Party were formed.

The sadar north subdivision Congress committee was formed in 1938 and Mohammad Lokman Khan Sherwani was its elected president.

The sadar south subdivision Congress committee was constituted in December, 1937. The members of the highest rank in the committee were as follows. Chairman-Jamini Mohan Basu, co-chairman-Anukul Chandra Das, secretary-Sachindra Nath Dasgupta, joint-secretary - Parsvanath Das.

The Cox's Bazar subdivisional Congress committee was formed in July, 1938. The local Congress members assembled in the local public library hall and nominated the members of the Cox's Bazar subdivisional Congress committee.<sup>4</sup>

Towards the close of the 1930s, the Congress Party accelerated its organizational activities at village level. In almost every progressive village a Congress committee was formed.

On June 12, 1937 All India Congress president Jawahar Lal Nehru, accompanied with his daughter Indira paid a brief visit to Chittagong for the purpose of seeing the organizational

activities for himself. He was given a warm welcome at the steamerghat. He addressed a large public meeting in the town.

In 1937 election, the Congress fared good. Mahim Chandra Das was elected on the Congress Party ticket to the legislative assembly. Dr. Sanaullah, a Nationalist Muslim leader supported by the Congress was elected to the assembly.

On June 10 to 11, 1938, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the Congress president accompanied with Ashrafuddin Ahmad, general secretary of the Bengal provincial Congress visited Chittagong. He along with his troupe was given a ceremonial reception at the railway station. During his stay in Chittagong, Netaji Bose undertook an extensive tour throughout the length and breadth of the district.

In the public meetings held in different places Netaji Subhas called on the people to broadcast the Congress ideology. On the 10th June, he addressed a mammoth meeting of 10,000 people at the parade ground. In every meeting Subhas Bose praised the revolutionaries of Chittagong. He recalled the illustrious memory of Jatindra Mohan Sengupta and comforted the people by praising the great services rendered by him. In a crowded meeting held at the J M Sen Hall both Netaji and Ashrafuddin Ahmad Chowdhury eloquently addressed the audience. At the end of the meeting Netaji paid homage to the relic of J M Sengupta kept reverently under ground in the campus. Netaji Subhas then ceremoniously hoisted the national flag in the campus of the hall.

On October 27, 1938, Maulvi Qazi Shamsuddin Khadem, a member of the Bengal provincial Congress public relations committee came to Chittagong to discuss with the Congress leaders about organizational activities of the party.

From 1938 to 1946 the Congress Party came into political confrontation with the communists and the Muslim League.

In March 1946, a general election was held. In this election Mrs Nellie Sengupta the Congress nominee defeated

the Communist nominee Mrs Kalpana Dutta (Joshi) by a big margin.

After the partition the Congress formed government in West Bengal but in East Pakistan it was gradually becoming weak and ultimately disappeared from the political scene.

From the days of the Anti Partition movement in 1905 to the Partition of Bengal in 1947 the Congress Party upheld nationalism, secularism and guided national movements adroitly against colonial regime.

On account of its secular ideology the Congress Party could attract the Muslims to itself. In Chittagong the Nationalist Muslims, the Khilafat Party, the Jamiat e Ulema e Hind took sides with the Congress on the question of freedom movement.

The Congress Party produced a number of political leaders, revolutionaries, dedicated social workers and patriots who played a vital role in the struggle for independence and in the activities connected with social advancement.

**The Nationalist Muslim Party.** In the beginning of the 20th century the Muslims especially the patriotic Muslims formed a new party named Muslim Nationalist Party. A nationalist Muslim is an advocate of or believer in nationalism rather Indian nationalism. He believes in a homogenous culture and in living together in perfect harmony with other religious sects.

The basic features of the Nationalist Muslim Party were common to the Congress Party. Both the parties unitedly carried out the national movements.

The Muslim Nationalist Party agreed in every detail with the ideology of the Khilafat Party. Both the parties held identical views regarding the manner of conducting the movement against British regime.

The chief spokesman paper of the nationalist Muslims was the 'Satyabarta'

On October 15, 1938, a conference of the nationalist Muslims was held at the J M Sen Hall. Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi, president of the district Krishak Praja Party inaugurated the conference. Dr. Sanaullah presided over the meeting. Lokman Khan Sherwani was chosen general secretary of the conference. The leading members of the Nationalist Muslim Party attended the conference.

The ideological difference between the nationalist Muslims and the Muslim League brought them face to face. From the latter part of the 1930s the relation between the nationalist Muslims and the Muslim League was growing bitter.

**The Khilafat Party.** Indian Muslims were much concerned about the conspiracy of the Allied Powers to dismantle the Khilafat or leadership of the Islamic community in the wake of Turkey's defeat.

Secondly, the Muslims of all over the world were seriously offended by the conspiracy of the Allied Powers to dismember the Turkish empire.

In the early part of the year 1920 a group of Muslim leaders taking sides in defending the sovereignty of the Turkish sultan formed the Khilafat Party in which the Muslims found a powerful forum to express their grievances. Within a short time the ideology of the Khilafat Party drew the Muslim intelligentsia to its fold.

Shaik i Chatgam Maulvi Kazem Ali, a school teacher by profession was the president and Chowdhury Nazir Ahmad, a prominent social worker and freedom fighter was the general secretary of the district Khilafat Party. The greatest organizer of the Khilafat Party was Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi.

Other prominent members of the Khilafat Party were Shah Badiul Alam, a journalist, Maulvi Abdul Karim a reputed scholar in Islamic theology, Mohammad Oliullah of Sandwip, Farrokh Ahmad Nezampuri, a school teacher and a journalist, Fakir Mia,

Badshah Mia, Ali Ahmad Oli Islamabadi, a spirited young writer and a journalist, Ekramul Haq and Serajul Haq, the two sons of Maulvi Kazem Ali. The Khilafat Party rapidly spread out all over the district during Khilafat Non Co-operation movement.

On the 31st August, 1921 Maulana Mohammad Ali (along with Gandhiji) visited Chittagong and addressed a large gathering at Gandhi maidan. His speech greatly inspired the Khilafat agitators to overthrow the foreign domination.

The Khilafat Party in cooperation with the Jamiat ul Ulema organized a mammoth meeting in the Jame Masjid precincts on September 13, 1929, to express grievances against the continued Jewish oppression on the Palestinian Muslims. Mohammad Jalaluddin Ahmed the then secretary of the Khilafat committee worked diligently to make the meeting successful.<sup>5</sup>

The Khilafat ideology not only played an important role in the freedom movement but it also lead to the religious revivalism. It created great interest in Islamic learning. Almost all the Khilafat leaders were men of letters and they wrote innumerable books and articles on the glorious past of Islam.

The Khilafat Party brought many Muslims of Chittagong to the doorway of political leadership.

**The Swarajya Party.** The abrupt cessation of the Non-Cooperation movement gave birth to a widespread discontentment in the Congress Party and led to its division into separate groups. A dissatisfied faction under the leadership of Motilal Nehru and Chittaranjan Das founded a new political party which was named the Swarajya Party. It was founded on December 31, 1922 and its manifesto was signed in January, 1923.

The question of entry to the legislature splitted the Congress Party into two groups. Those who were in favour of joining the assembly gained admittance to the Swarajya Party. Chittaranjan Das was nominated president of the Swarajya Party.

The Swarajya Party supported the extremists in their terroristic activites. As a result the secret societies like the Anushilan Dal and the Jugantar Dal began to act openly.<sup>6</sup>

The Swarajya Party was in favour of giving the Muslims more seats in the legislature. The policy of the Swarajya Party gained political support of the Muslims.

The Swarajya Party, however, never sever itself from the Congress with which it always maintained close contacts.

The district branch of the Swarajya Party was founded in 1924 and J M Sengupta was nominated its president. After the death of Chittaranjan Das he became the president of the provincial committee. Under his able leadership the Swarajya Party gained increasing popularity in all parts of the province. J M Sengupta was elected to the provincial assembly on the Swarajya Party ticket.

The most remarkable achievement of the Swarajya Party was the negotiation with the Muslims on political issues which lead to an agreement between the Hindus and the Muslims in 1923. This agreement was known as Bengal Pact.

In 1923 election, most of the Muslim seats were captured by the Muslim Swarajists. In Chittagong Nurul Haq Chowdhury a prominent member of the Swarjya Party was elected to the assembly.

**The Communist Party.** The Communist Party is the organization of industrial and agricultural labourers. It seized the power in Russia with the help of army in 1917.

The Russian Revolution exercised great influence on the revolutionaries of Bengal. A number of books and pamphlets were written on the Russian Revolution. Communist literature was freely distributed in the late 1920s. These books and pamphlets had tremendous influence especially on the youths of the country.

Comrade Muzaffar Ahmad (1898-1973) was one of the

principal organizer of the Communist Party in the district. In early 1920s, he made contact with the leftist revolutionary M N Roy. Together with the leftists he gave the group a shape of a political party in Calcutta in 1924-25 and named it the Bengal Workers and Peasant Party. The party published a weekly paper named 'Langal.'

In 1925 the activities of the Communist Party was restricted by official decree. In order to carry on their political acivities the Communist Party assumed the name of the Peasants and Workers Party in 1927. From 1930 to 1934, during the Chittagong Revolt the party activities were proscribed by the govenrment regulations.

In 1934 the Communist Party of India gained recognition as a branch of Communist International. The party adopted badge of hammer and sickle. In the latter part of the 1930s the Communist Party organized 'Kishan Sabha' as a part of the peasant movement. From 1936 to 1947 Kishan Sabhas were organized in many villages of Chittagong.

On September 11, 1938, Dr Suresh Chandra Banarji, a prominent socialist leader visited to Chittagong. He was warmly received at the railway station. At afternoon he addressed a large meeting at the J M Sen Hall. He exchanged opinion with the local leftist leaders regarding the manner of conducting party activities.

During the Second World War the Comunist Party of India supported the British government in its war against Nazism. In 1941 the government further relaxed the prohibitive measures imposed on the Communist Party. As a result the Chittagong District Communist Party emerged as a disciplined and coherent political body. Many of the released detenus joined the Communist Party.

The formation of Students Federation in 1938 was a major step to put the Communist Party in a stronger position. In almost every higher educational institution Students

Federation was formed to contest the students election.

The 'Adhikar', the chief spokesman newspaper of the Chittagong district Communist Party was being published in Lyall Road. In September 1939, the paper was proscribed by the government under 7(3) of the Indian Press Emergency Powers, 1931. The 'Sangram' another newspaper pertaining to communist ideology was published in Chittagong town. The 'Sangram' was proscribed by the government on January 27, 1940.<sup>7</sup>

During the period between 1939 and 1941, a number of bulletins on the communist ideology were circulated throughout the district.

In the middle of the 1940s, the activities of the Communist Party were mainly centred on an agricultural movement called tebhaga movement. In literal sense tebhaga means one third. The tebhaga demanded for two thirds share of the crops to be kept by the cultivators and one third for the zamindars. The communists pleaded that the tebhaga would solve the problems of the peasantry. Through the Kishan Sabha and the tebhaga movement the communist activists could easily win the heart and mind of the peasantry.

The Communist Party became strong enough to contest for seats in the provincial legislature. In 1946 election the popularity of the party was proved by mass support. Some important members of the Communist Party in the 1940s were Kalpana Dutta, Ranadhir Dasgupta, Purnendu Kanungo, Nanigopal Sengupta, Kalpataru Sengupta, Comrade Abdus Sattar etc.

The Praja Samiti or the Krishak Praja Party. In 1929 Nikhil Banga Praja Samiti was established to help the cultivator class. Shortly after its foundation, the Samiti opened a branch in Chittagong. The working committee (1930-31) of the district Praja Samiti constituted as follows : president - Khan Bahadur Maulvi Abdus Sattar, general secretary-Abdul Latif B A B L, secretary-Debendra Das Chowdhury. The chief organizer

of the Samiti was Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi.

The activities of the Praja Samiti was slowed down during the period from 1930 to 1934 on account of the government restrictions imposed on political activities.

In 1935 Praja Samiti was renamed Krishak Praja Party. In 1936 Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi was president and Ekramul Haq was general secretary of the district Krishak Praja Party. In 1937 Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi was elected to the provincial legislative assembly on the Krishak Praja Party ticket.

On account of the weakness in central organization and difference of opinion among the top leaders in the central body, the popularity of the Krishak Praja Party sharply declined. According to Leonard A Gordon, Fazlul Haq inclined towards the Muslim League for support.

On February 16, 1939, a meeting of the district Krishak Praja Party was held. The meeting advised the members to propose the name of Maulana Manirazzaman Islamabadi as president of Nikhil Banga Krishak Praja Party.

The meeting proposed the names of following persons as delegates to the next conference of the party. 1. Maulana Mohammad Maniruzzaman Islamabadi, 2. Dr. Sanaullah, 3. Maulvi Md. Ekramul Haq, 4. Maulvi Md. Abdul Monaem, 5. Al Hajj Maulvi Nurul Afsar Chowdhuri (Maghadia), 6. Maulvi Nurul Afsar Chowdhury (Mohammadpur), 7. Maulvi Golam Sobhan, 8. Maulvi Farrokh Ahmad Nezampuri and others.<sup>8</sup> All of them were the leading members of the district Krishak Praja Party.

In the beginning of the year 1939 the chief minister and president of the Krishak Praja Party Fazlul Haq paid a visit to Chittagong. In 1941 Fazlul Haq formed the progressive coalition ministry. In 1943 Fazlul Haq ministry was replaced by Suhrawardi Nazimuddin ministry. The Muslim League ministry dealt a great blow to the Krishak Praja Party. In 1946 election Krishak Praja Party secured only four seats in the assembly. The political situation at the time made it difficult

for the Krishak Praja party to survive from the crisis.

**The Muslim League.** The Muslim League was founded by Nawab Salimullah in December, 1906. Its demand was at that time separate electorate and reserved seats for the Muslims in the provincial legislature. It opposed subversive activities against the British government.

In the early stage the Muslim League was dominated by the wealthy and upper class people. According to educationist Abdur Rahman, Salamat Ali Khan the zamindar of Dohazari was one of the founding members of the Muslim League.<sup>9</sup>

From 1906 to 1930 Muslim League conducted its political activities in cooperation with other political parties and shared with others in national movements.

During the Swadeshi and Boycott movements the Muslim League lent its support to the anti government agitation though it did not actively take part in political protest.

The Lucknow Pact concluded by the Congress and the Muslim League in 1916 gave high position to the Muslim League in relation to other Muslim political organizations. The pact provided for the joint action against the British rule. On September 7, 1920 the Muslim League joined the Non Cooperation and Khilafat movements.

According to Leonard A Gordon, "From the late 1920s upto about 1937....the Muslim League was weak as a national organization."<sup>10</sup> This wanting in strength of the Muslim League was due to the predominance of nationalist Muslims as representatives of the Muslim community. Many nationalist Muslims, however, supported the Muslim League and shared their political views. In 1928 the Muslim League presented Fourteen Points. In spite of the Congress Party's support to these points, these were rejected by the government.

It is interesting to note that the district Muslim League working committee, formed at a meeting held at the Muslim Hall on November 1, 1929 was dominated by either nationalist Muslims or the Muslims of other political affiliation. Most of

the Muslim League politicians supported liberal relation with other political parties. The following panel of office bearers shows the fact. President : Maulvi Mohammad Nurul Afsar Chowdhury, M.L.C. Assistant chairmen : Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi, Mr. Nur Ahmad, Md. Abdul Gani Chowdhury, Asad Ali, Shaikh Wazed Ali Chowdhury, Muzaffar Ahmad Chowdhury, Nazir Ahmad Chowdhury, Haji Nazu Meah Saudagar, Mohammad Ekramul Haq, Amanat Khan, Mohammad Ibrahim, Mohammad Hossain. General secretary : Mv. Hakim Rafiq Ahmad. Joint secretary : Mv. Golam Qader Chowdhury. Assistant secretaries : Syed Faiz Ahmad Chowdhury, S M Mofakkhar, Jalal Ahmad, Abdul Monaem. Cashier : Mv. Nur Ahmad.<sup>11</sup>

On April 18, 1930 the Muslim League joined the All Muslim Conference held at the parade ground under the over all guidance of Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi.

In the early part of the 1930s the Muslim League was taking a shape of organized political party. In 1931 Maulvi Abdul Khaleque, a retired sub judge and Shaikh Rafiuddin Siddiqie were president and general secretary of the district Muslim League respectively. Under their dynamic leadership the recruitment activities geared up for playing stronger role in provincial politics. They held their posts till 1937.

In the latter half of the 1930s the Muslim League assumed an aggressive role in establishing its ideology. The ideological difference between the Muslim League and the nationalist Muslims was becoming wider. The nationalist Muslims believed in Muslim nationalism on all India basis. On the otherhand, the Muslim League believed in separate identity of the Muslims. The nationalist Muslims believed in heterogeneity of culture. The Muslim League believed in homogeneity of the Muslim culture and the protection of Muslim interests. Everywhere in the district the nationalist Muslims suffered ill treatment by the aggressive Muslim leaguers.

The Krishak Praja Party became their next target of

attack. The Muslim League circulated pamphlets attacking Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi in 1937.

The Muslim League activists demonstrated discontesy to Professor Humayun Kabir, President of the Congress Socialist Party while he was delivering his speech in a crowded meeting held on July 9, 1938.

The coalition government formed by the Krishak Praja and the Muslim League (1939-41) contributed greatly to the growing influence of the Muslim League.

The All Bengal Muslim Students League played a vital role in strengthening the Muslim League in the district level. In 1941 Fazlul Qader Chowdhury was nominated general secretary of All India Aligarh Muslim Students Federation. Later on, he became the president of the Chittagong branch of All Bengal Muslim Students League. Some of his associates were Abu Saleh Muhammad Mofakkar of Chandgaon and Ziaul Islam Chowdhury.

Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah made a clarion call to the Muslims to observe the 'Deliverance Day' on December 2, 1939. His call was warmly responded to by the Muslim League.

In the Lahore conference of the Muslim League the demand for the creation of a Muslim majority state was presented. The demand of a separate state for the Muslims not only roused much rejoicings among the Muslims but it changed the course of action of the Muslim politics. From 1940 the Muslim League inclined gradually to the separatist movement.

The post Second World War period witnessed rapid increase in political activities of the Muslim League. The organizational activities of the Muslim League leader Abul Hashem contributed much to the strengthening of the Muslim League. He laid stress on the mass communication and decentralization of party activities. Within a short time the organization was extended to the subdivision and the thana level. "All District and Subdivisional branches of the League were instructed to

arrange their permanent party offices."<sup>12</sup> In these reorganizational activities Abul Hashem was inspired by the Communist Party of India.<sup>13</sup>

In 1945 A K Khan and Fazlul Qader Chowdhury were nominated president and secretary of the district Muslim League respectively. Jahur Ahmed Chowdhury held the post of publicity secretary.

The 'Azad', edited by Maulana Akram Khan was the chief spokesman newspaper of the Muslim League. It was very much popular among the Muslims of the district.

The Muslim League ministry (1943-45) headed by Khwaja Nazimuddin and H S Suhrawardi helped much to increase the strength of the Muslim League. On April 24, 1946 H S Suhrawardi singularly formed League ministry which lasted till 1947. In 1946 Shaikh Rafiuddin Siddiqi was elected president of the district Muslim League.

The Muslim League launched a vigorous election campaign throughout the province against other Muslim dominated parties in order to achieve political dominance in the assembly. The campaign was amazingly successful. In 1946 election out of the 121 Muslim seats in the provincial assembly the Muslim League gained 115 seats.

The meeting of the council of the All India Muslim League held on January 6, 1946 reasserted "the Muslim demand for the establishment of a full sovereign Pakistan as the only solution of the Indian constitutional problem."

Many of the Muslim League leaders, however, were not in favour of joining Pakistan. Sarat Bose, H S Suhrawardi and Abul Hashem advocated an independent and united Bengal. Even "Mohammad Ali Jinnah is said to have given his blessing to such a move."<sup>14</sup> But the hard liner Muslim League members under the leadership of Khwaja Nazimuddin wanted to put eastern Bengal united with Pakistan. Ultimately, they were successful in winning the public mind and East Bengal changed

to East Pakistan to be incorporated within Pakistan.

**The Hindu Mahasabha.** The aim of the Hindu Mahasabha was the protection and promotion of all that contributed to the advancement of Hindu society and culture. It also aimed at the establishment of a Hindu Rashtra.

The Bengal Provincial Hindu Sabha as a distinct political organization came into existence in early 1920s. In the latter part of 1930s the orthodox section of the Congress left it to join the Hindu Mahasabha.

There is no definite information about the formation of the working committee of the district Hindu Mahasabha and its functions. In 1936 the general secretary of the Mahasabha was Jogesh Chandra Paul. One of the most prominent leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha was Suresh Chandra Banarji.<sup>15</sup>

Under the Hindu Mahasabha's supervision the Obhoy Mitra's Smashan Ghat, the chief crematorium in the town for the purpose of burning Hindu corpses was reconstructed.

The activities of the Hindu Mahasabha was not great enough to notice its impact on the Hindu society of the district.

**Jamiyat ul Ulema.** The Chittagong branch of the Jamiyat ul Ulema i Hind was founded by Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi in 1919. He was not only the principal adviser but also he formulated principles for the guidance of the party. The party was working in co-operation with the nationalist Muslims and the Khilafatists during the Non Co-operation-Khilafat movement (1920-22) The Anjumane Ulema merged into the Jamiyat ul Ulema.<sup>16</sup>

Towards the end of the 1920s the secretary of the Jamiyat was Hakim Maulvi Rafiq Ahmad.<sup>17</sup>

The Jamiyat ul Ulema played a vital role in organizing All Muslim conference held on April 18, 1930.<sup>18</sup>

In the latter part of the 1930s the party took active part in up holding the interests of the peasantry

In 1936 poet Muhammad Ibrahim was nominated chairman of the district Jamiat ul Ulema Party.

On January 16, 1938 a large public meeting was held in Sarafbhata (Rangunia Upazilla) under the auspices of Jamiat ul Ulema. Poet Muhammad Ibrahim presided over the meeting.

**The Forward Block.** The Forward Block was founded by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. It may be mentioned that the Forward Block was formed as a leftist group of the Congress<sup>19</sup> and supported the ideas and beliefs of socialism. The party programmes were direct action in relation to the struggle for independence, repudiation of all compromises and aimed at the establishment of a socialistic state in India. The 'Forward' edited by Bhupendra Kumar Dutta was the spokesman paper of the Forward Block.

It is not definitely known when the Chittagong branch of the Forward Block was opened. Many of the ex-detenus joined the party. Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi was an active member of the Forward Block.

**The Radical Democratic Party.** At the time of the out break of the Second World War M N Roy transformed his small group the League of Radical Congressmen into a new political party. In 1940, it was named Radical Democratic Party.

The aims and objects of the Radical Democratic Party have been publicly announced in the written statement of the party meeting held in Bombay in the last week of December, 1946. The party had many things in common with the ideas of other left wing political parties.

Lokanath Baul of famous Chittagong Armoury Raid joined the Radical Democratic Party after his release from the jail. He devoted himself to the organization of the party in Chittagong. The party, however, never gained public attention on any scale.

**Note :**

- 1 For details see S.B. Qanungo, *The Chittagong Revolt, 1930-34*
- 2 The *Deshapriya*, Jan 31, 1939, p. 7
- 3 Thomas A Rusch, 'Role of the Congress Socialist Party in the Indian National Congress', qt. Leonard A Gordon, *Bengal. The Nationalist Movement, 1876-1940*, p. 258
- 4 The *Deshapriya*, 1345, p. 25
- 5 The *Bangla Gazette*, 1929, p. 6
- 6 Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 193
- 7 Shishir Kar, *British Shasane Bajeyapta Bangla Boi* p. 323
- 8 The *Deshapriya*, Feb. 19, 1939
- 9 Abdur Rahman, *Jatatuksu Mane Pare*
- 10 Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 279
- 11 The *Bangla gazette*, 1929
- 12 *History of Bangladesh*, 1, 391
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 392
- 14 Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 291
- 15 The *Panchajanya*, Autumn Number, 1936
- 16 The *Bangla Gazette*, 1929, No 15
- 17 *Ibid.*, July, 1929
- 18 *Ibid.*, 1930
- 19 The *Prabasi*, 1346, p. 422

## Chapter 8

# Independence Movement

The English acquired Chittagong through a secret treaty with the Mughals in which no mention was made of the transfer of land by the Mughals to the English. But the English began to assert authority to rule the district and gradually tightened their grip over the district.

The people would not concede their political position to the British imperialism. They believed that the English were usurpers and they had no right of governing the country. This adversarial feeling about the English authority gave birth to the resistance movement, the aim of which was to overthrow the foreign domination and to establish the government by its own people.

The freedom movement can be divided into two phases. First, the revolts against British rule in the first half of the nineteenth century in order to drive out the British people from Indian soil. Second, the independence movement in the first half of the twentieth century characterized by nationalistic, political and terroristic activities.

The strong opposition to the British rule was manifested in the Wahabi movement, Faraizi movement, Titu Mir's rebellion, Fakir Sannyasi movement and the Sepoy Mutiny. All these revolts involved violence and were suppressed with utmost cruelty.

**The Sepoy Mutiny, 1857.** The British occupation of the Indian subcontinent stimulated a strong anti-British and anti-western feeling among the Indian recruits of the British army. The Indian recruits called sepoys rose in rebellion in 1857 against the authoritative behaviour of the British

government.

The Sepoy mutiny started at Barrackpore and at a rapid rate it spread all over northern India. They killed a large number of British people and set fire to the British establishments.

According to Buckland, "Chittagong was theatre of a serious mutiny."<sup>1</sup> At the time of the mutiny the 2nd, 3rd and the 4th companies of the 34th Regiment Native Infantry were garrisoned in Chittagong. At the outbreak of the rebellion in June the European inhabitants of the town became very much panicky. According to the magistrate W H Henderson, "... A great many of the families have embarked upon vessels lying at anchor in the harbour, and have left their houses."<sup>2</sup> According to the report of the officiating commissioner, dated Nov. 19, 1857, "... the three companies of the 34th Regiment Native Infantry rose suddenly at 11 p. m last evening, They released all prisoners from the jail, killed one barkandaz (native constable), carried away all the treasure, and left the station at 3 A M this morning with three government elephants, ammunition and treasure."<sup>3</sup> The commissioner further writes, "...the mutiny was evidently planned very suddenly and as suddenly carried out."<sup>4</sup>

The mutineers after leaving Chittagong marched northwards, and on the 22nd Nov. they crossed the river Feni and entered the territory of the Raja of Hill Tipperah. Their party, consisted in all of about 500 persons, including women, children, and the persons set free from the jail.<sup>5</sup>

The leader of the mutineers in Chittagong was Thakur Bux.

### The Anti Partition and Swadeshi Movement

The government's decision to divide Bengal Presidency into two provinces raised a storm of protest throughout the province, particularly in the Bengalee predominant areas. This protest gave rise to Anti-Partition movement which is manifested in the widespread political agitation, popularly called

Swadeshi movement.

The Anti-Partition movement within a short time turned to Bengali nationalistic movement. The Bengali nationalism is revealed in Swadeshi or love of one's own country and he has a feeling that his country is better than any other. Thus the Swadeshi ideology is closely connected with nationalism.

Nationalism or patriotic feeling is basically an western idea. The western educated middle class intelligentsia propagated Swadeshi ideology among the people.

In the Swadeshi ideology Bengal has been conceived as the mother of its inhabitants (Deshamatrika). Bangamata has been personified deity of Bengal. To the Bengalees partition of Bengal means to cut limbs from the body of Bangamata.

The awakening of Swadeshi ideas is manifested in the patriotic writings related to the philosophical and theological ideas. In Chittagong, patriotic writings in the form of poetical works of Nabin Chandra Sen, Shasanka Mohan Sen, Jibendra Kumar Dutta, Bipin Behari Nandi created a wave of patriotism.

'Bande Mataram' (Mother, I bow to you). the first line of the immortal song in praise of mother country, composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee became a political 'mantra' of the Swadeshi agitators. It was a common sight that thousands of youths of all communities going in procession along the streets singing this immortal song. Throughout the Independence movement period 'Bande Mataram' became common form of greetings and salutation. It is said that Maulana Akram Khan liked the singing of 'Bande Mataram'.<sup>6</sup>

A number of writers of musical poems all over Bengal composed innumerable Swadeshi songs and lyrical poems. The 'Swadeshi Gatha' written by Kamini Kumar Bhattacharya and published in Chittagong was proscribed on March 7, 1911.<sup>7</sup> A compilatory work on patriotic songs named 'Bande Mataram' written by Barada Charan Chakravorty and Raman Mohan Das was published in Chittagong. The book was proscribed in 1911 and the writers were officially penalised.<sup>8</sup>

In order to practise the singing of patriotic songs a music school named Arya Sangeet Samiti was founded in 1906. Throughout the period of the Independence movement this music school and the great songster Surendra Lal Dasgupta Sangeetacharya, one of the founders of the school, played an important role in rousing patriotic feeling.

The Swadeshi Jatra (open air drama) played an active and important role in propagating swadeshi ideas among the rural folk. Tarak Chandra Roy, Durga Charan Pathak, Govinda Das Chowdhury were some of the well known swadeshi playwrights of Chittagong.<sup>9</sup>

In spite of the great popularity of swadeshi dramas, all of these could not be staged publicly. The district magistrate was given authority to prohibit the performance of any play that might incite feeling against the government.

A number of ashrams or religious asylums were founded in different parts of the district. In these ashrams the sannyasis (ascetics) taught their disciples to worship the mother country. In fact, these ashrams were the centres of Swadeshi activities. The Jagatpur Ashram was established by Purnananda Paramahamsa about the year 1902. Another political sanctuary was Fateyabad Guhashram. It was burnt down by the police during anti partition movement. The Medhas Muni Ashram situated on the Karaldenga Hill Range was an important place of gathering of militant patriots.

The Chittagong Association, established in 1875 was the first organized body dealing with politics and public affairs. From the beginning, the Association was very critical of the government's policy of partitioning the province. The Association boldly protested against the enactment of repressive laws and upheld political privileges of an individual. The Association made a vehement protest against the enactment of the Code of Criminal Procedure Bill, 1898.<sup>10</sup>

Encouragement of home industries and favouring the

homemade products were the two principal subjects of Swadeshi ideology. Nalini Kanta Sen, the enthusiastic young Swadeshi agitator and his associates established an organization named 'Shilpa Rakshini Samiti' in 1896. The aim of the Samiti was to implement such measures as abstaining from the purchase of British manufactures, the encouragement of indigenous manufacture and production of their substitutes.

The Swadeshi agitators of Chittagong pleaded for the establishment of national schools under private management for educating the pupils usually of nationalistic spirit. The renowned nationalist leader Harish Chandra Dutta founded the National High School in Chittagong town in 1896. He was the Headmaster of this institution for many years. Shah Badiul Alam founded a school in his native village Ijjatnagar in 1905. This school never received government recognition.

The examples of Chittagong nationalists inspired the Swadeshis of Calcutta. The National Council of Education was founded in Calcutta on march 11, 1906. The council urged the nationalists to establish national school in their respective areas.

To make the youths desirous of reading, a book stall named Chhatra Bhandar was established in Chittagong by Nalini Chowdhury to supply books especially patriotic and religious books to the youths.

In July, 1905 some influential merchants and zamindars started the Bengal Steam Navigation Company with a capital of Rs 1 lac. The company successfully ran a passenger ship service between Chittagong, Akyab and Rangoon despite stiff competition from European companies.

In 1892 the government of India put up a proposal that the Chittagong Division should be transferred from Bengal to Assam. In 1896 the chief commissioner of Assam Sir William Ward suggested that Chittagong Division should be transferred to Assam. The government decision raised a storm of protest all over the district.

In the divisional conferences, held in different places of Chittagong Division, a strong protest was expressed against the decision of the government to transfer Chittagong to Assam.

The first Chittagong Divisional Conference was convened on March 29 and 30, 1902 at the parade ground in the town. The delegates expressed very strong disapproval of the partition of Bengal.

On March 13 and 14, 1903 the second Chittagong Divisional Conference was held at Comilla town. Jatra Mohan Sen, Shasanka Mohan Sen, Annada Charan Dutta, Maulvi Kazem Ali were some of the leading delegates from Chittagong.<sup>11</sup>

The Third Chittagong Divisional Conference was held at Noakhali on April 2 and 3, 1904. Jatra Mohan Sengupta presided over the conference. The conference was attended by a large group of delegates from Chittagong.

In all these divisional conferences the delegates expressed strong opposition to the partition of Bengal.

The larger portion of the Muslims of Bengal took stand against the partition of Bengal. The Muslim Nationalist Party opposed the partition. Syed Amir Ali was not in favour of the partition. The Central National Muhammadan Association opposed the partition.<sup>12</sup>

An all communities conference was held at the parade ground on October 1, 1903. The conference was inaugurated by Salamat Ali Khan and was presided over by Prasanna Kumar Roy.<sup>13</sup> In this conference the speakers strongly protested against the government action of partitioning Bengal.

On Sunday January 17, 1904 a mass protest meeting was held in the parade ground. The meeting was presided over by Anwar Ali Khan, a member of the District Board.<sup>14</sup> The meeting was attended by such eminent Swadeshi leaders as Kamala Kanta Sen, Jatramohan Sen, Kanta Prasad Hazari, Obaidur Rahman Khan, Mia Reazuddin Ahmad Munshi,

J R Percival, Nagendra Kumar Roy, Shasanka Mohan Sen, Jagat Chandra Rakshit and others. The gathering was so very large that the parade ground could not accomodate it. Firy speeches were delivered against the proposed partition.

At the end of the meeting some of the leaders were deputed to meet the divisional commissioner and to hand over to him a memorandum containing the resolutions adopted in the meeting.

A few days after, a body of delegates under the leadership of Kamala Kanta Sen. Prasanna Kumar Roy, Maulvi Anwar Ali Khan, Nagendra Kumar Roy started for Calcutta to meet the Lt. Governor. On the 10th February they met Lt Governor Sir Andrew Fraser and handed over to him a copy of the resolutions adopted in the meeting.

All these protests, however, could not move the government back from the decision. In November, 1903 Sir Andrew Fraser, the Lt. Governor of Bengal wrote a note strongly advocating the transfer of Chittagong Division to Assam.

On February 15, 1904 Lord Curzon paid a visit to Chittagong and stayed for two days. He addressed a large public meeting in which he explained the advantages of the creation of the new provinces. He also exchanged opinions with local leaders and comforted them with the idea that the proposed creation of the new province would make the port of Chittagong more prosperous.

In August 1905, the Boycott movement united with the Swadeshi movement to carry on struggle more vigorously against partition of Bengal. Boycott movement means to abstain from using and buying British goods. Boycott of British goods was the negative side of the Swadeshi movement.

The Swadeshi and Boycott movements took turn to militant nationalism which is embodied in the formation of samitis or associations.

The Anushilan Samiti was established on March 24, 1902.

The Chittagong branch of the Anushilan Samiti was established in 1906 at the instance of Bipin Chandra Paul.<sup>15</sup>

The Jugantar Dal was founded by Dr. Bhupendra Nath Dutta in the early part of 1906. The activities of the Jugantar Dal had not been started in Chittagong before the 1920s.

The Chattagram Hitasadhani Samiti was founded by Jatra Mohan Sen and his associates during the early period of the Swadeshi movement. It was established for the purpose of transforming Swadeshi ideas into practical experience of the work. Though outwardly it was an organization aimed at the social upliftment, in reality, it was linked with Swadeshi agitation. The Hitasadhani Samiti was established in many progressive villages.

An organization named Chattagram Hindu Hitoishini Sabha is referred to in the contemporary newspapers as a secret organization.<sup>16</sup> Outwardly, the purpose of the organization was to promote social being of the Hindu society. In reality, the members of this organization worked together with the militant group.

The Anti Partition agitation was intensified by degree from the beginning of the year 1905. Swadeshi ideology now turned to the revolutionary creed. It was manifested in the counter strike against the government. The agitators openly defied the government orders sometimes in an aggressive way.

The government of Bengal issued circular after circular banning the public meetings and crying of anti government slogans. On October 10, 1905 R W Carlisle promulgated a circular declaring the slogan of Bande Mataram illegal. It also prohibited to join an agitational procession.

On September 18, 1905, Bhupendra Nath Bose came to Chittagong and delivered patriotic speeches in public meetings.<sup>17</sup>

It was decided that October 16, 1905, the date of the execution of the proposed partition would be observed as black

day. The programme included arrangement of protest meetings, to go to anti-government processions and crying of patriotic slogans.

On December 11, 1905 the agitators called for a transport strike in protest against Lt Governor Bamfylde Fuller's visit to Chittagong.

On March 15, 1906 a day long programme marked by going in procession along the streets, crying of patriotic stogans, giving speeches in public meetings and burning of foreign goods was arranged.

On April 20, 1906 the bust sculpture of Queen Victoria in the Municipal Garden was blemished. Next day, Mr. Dixon, the magistrate collector of Chittagong cleansed the sculpture.

The first May was observed as protest day. The workers went on a strike against the oppressive actions of the government.

On September 2, 1906 Bipin Chandra Paul came to Chittagong and gave Swadeshi speeches in a very strong language for three successive days.

On October 16, the first anniversary of the partition of Bengal was observed in memory of a painful event. A whole day strike, Rakhi Bandhan and non cooking (fasting) were some of the programmes intended to remind the people of a sad event.

Throughout the Swadeshi movement period corps of volunteers were formed in almost every village. These volunteers played a vital role in spreading Swadeshi ideas among the masses.

The combative spirit of the volunteer corps could be understood from the beginning of the year 1907. Their main task was the encouragement of physical culture and distribution of inflammatory handbills. The volunteers distributed thirty thousand handbills at a Siva Ratri Mela (Sitakunda) held in February, 1907.<sup>18</sup> The Police Report states that there were 59 volunteers upto June, 1907.<sup>19</sup> In reality, the size of the

volunteer corps was much bigger than the number supplied by the police.

In April, 1907, the District Conference (Chattagram Sammilani) under the sponsorship of the Hitasadhani Samiti was scheduled to be held at Quepara. An elaborate programme was chalked out containing a week long exhibition and fair, showing skill in physical exercises etc. Bipin Chandra Paul, the chief guest was included among the principal speakers. At the time of the starting of the meeting the police made an armed raid without warning on the meeting and dispersed the gathering with sticks.

The Muslim nationalists joined the Congress to work together in conducting the Anti-Partition movement.

The militant nationalism gradually turned to terrorism from the latter part of the year 1907. However, there was no terroristic activities in Chittagong throughout the period of the Swadeshi movement.

The partition settlement was withdrawn in December 1911 in the face of strong opposition of the people. The revocation may be viewed as a triumph of Bengalee nationalism.

The Swadeshi movement was an extremely important event in the history of the freedom movement. As a result of this movement the Bengalees became conscious of their common history, language and heritage which aided all the people of all parts of the province in forming a national identity.

The Bengal Provincial Conference was held on 6th and 7th April 1912 at the parade ground. The delegates expressed their satisfaction at the repeal of the partition and thanked the government for the steps taken in this direction.

**Extremist activities.** From 1912 instances of secret killing increased alarmingly. In most cases the informers and those who sided with the government were the targets of

attack. In 1912 Jatindra Ban, the mohanto of Sitakunda was assassinated. In 1913 a man named Sudhangsu was shot dead in the town. Jagat Chandra Ghosh a pleader in the Patiya court was assassinated.<sup>20</sup> In 1924 Premananda Dutta a young revolutionary shot the police officer Mr. Prafulla Roy dead. The motive of these secret killings was doubtful. The police and the detective department do not help much to find out the causes of the killings.

In 1913 Chandrasekhar De, a revolutionary was arrested on the ground of his alleged connection with Rajabazar bomb conspiracy. He was sentenced to life imprisonment. Chandra Sekhar was the first revolutionary who was connected with violent conspiracy against government.

**Political agitation.** In 1916 Home Rule League was established jointly by Dr. Annie Besant and Balagangadhar Tilak. The Home Rule movement gave birth to self government movement in 1917-18. Within a short time it gained wide spread popularity. In the public meetings organized by the agitators, the speakers demanded greater share in the administration.

In 1918 a group of young revolutionaries formed a secret revolutionary organization. The prominent members of this organization were Surya Sen, Anurup Chandra Sen, Charu Bikash Dutta, Nagen Sen and Ananta Singh. The deep difference of opinion within the organization led to the break up of the organization.

The Montague Chelmsford Reform Bill failed to fulfil the desire of the Indian people. Popular unrest spread out all over the country. To suppress the agitation a severe legislation called the Rowlatt Act was passed in 1919. It provided for arrest and trial even without a show of normal legal procedure. On the sixth April, 1919 the whole country did go on strike in protest of the Rowlatt Act.

To express their grievances a large number of people gathered at the field of Jalian walabagh on the 13th April, 1919.

To disperse the agitators the police started firing of guns on the innocent mob. As a result thousands of people were either killed or wounded on the spot. This cruel action overcame the whole nation with grief and caused hatred against British rule all over the country.

### The Non Cooperation and Khilafat Movements

In 1919 the Congress launched non violent non co-operation movement against colonial rule. Non Co-operation means the refusal to co-operate with the British rulers in every field. Its aim was to compel the British government of India to grant self government.

Indian Muslims were very much concerned about the conspiracy of the Allied Powers to dismantle the Turkish sultan who was thought as the leader of the Muslim world. The Allied Powers' plan of dismemberment of the Turkish empire greatly offended the Muslims of all Muslim countries. In 1919 the Khilafat Party started the Khilafat Movement all over India. The Nationalist Muslims and the Jamiat ul Ulema took part with the Khilafat Party in conducting the movement. In 1920 the Muslim League joined the Khilafat movement. Throughout the period of the movement Khilafat meetings were held everywhere in the district. A market stall of swadeshi goods called khilafat stores was opened by khilafat agitators of Chittagong at Calcutta.

The Non Co-operation movement and the Khilafat movement were a joint action against the authoritative rule. Gandhiji condemned the British administration in India as 'Satanic Rule.' "The Khilafat agitators openly described Great Britain to be the arch enemy of Islam."<sup>21</sup> In Chittagong Jatra Mohan Sen was giving an overall direction to the Non Co-operation movement and Shaikh e Chatgam Mohammad Kazem Ali was giving guidance to the Khilafatists. Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi was the chief organizer of the Khilafat movement. The death of Jatra Mohan Sen in the early period of the movement was an irreparable loss to the

movement.

The Non Cooperation and the Khilafat leaders jointly announced the following common actions. (a) resignation of titles and honorary offices, (b) resignation of posts in the government and government aided services, (c) refusal to pay taxes, (d) boycott of government educational institutions, (e) resignation of services in the police and in the army.

Jatindra Mohan Sengupta, Prasanna Kumar Sen, Moksada Ranjan Kanungo, Mahim Chandra Das and host of other legal practitioners gave up their legal profession. Professor Nripendra Chandra Banarji relinquished his job as vice-principal of Chittagong College and founded 'Saraswat Ashram'.

On the 14th March, 1921, Chittaranjan Das came to Chittagong to preach the doctrine of Non Cooperation. He delivered an eloquent speech in the town hall defending the anti government agitation. In the same platform Jatindra Mohan Sengupta, Kazem Ali, Pratap Chandra Guha Roy, Tripura Charan Chowdhury, Prasanna Kumar Sen, Shamsuddin Ahmad, Shah Badiul Alam and other leaders addressed the meeting. Chittaranjan Das called on the youth to put an end to the British rule and to establish Swaraj or self government.

Jatindra Mohan Sengupta resorted to strong measures against the government. He called on the employees and labourers to abstain from working in government workshops. The employees of the Burmah Oil Company in collaboration with Steam Navigation Company did go on strike on April 17, 1921. On the 1st May the labourers of all government establishments abstained from work. On May 4, 1921 the people did go on strike in protest of the imposition of 144 Act. In a public meeting, J M Sengupta and other leaders delivered fiery speeches. The district magistrate Mr Strong invited J M Sengupta and others for a table talk but it ended in failure. Tea garden labourers stopped working in the tea gardens. On the 17th and the 18th May, the coolies at the steamer ghats refused to work. The coolie strike brought the riverports to a complete deadlock.

Tea garden strike and the exodus of coolies from the tea gardens aggravated the situation. On the 20th and the 22nd May the police made violent attacks on the assembled tea garden coolies in the steamer ghats. The employees of the Assam Bengal Railway did go on strike on the 24th and the 25th May.

These concerted refusal to work by the employees almost paralysed the business transactions of the whole province.

To check the strikes and public meetings the government undertook strong measures. Laws were enforced prohibiting all kinds of anti government activities. On July 2, 1921, Jatindra Mohan Sengupta, Mahim Chandra Das and 16 others broke 144 and courted arrest and imprisonment. On July, 24, the police forcefully dispersed a gathering of protesters at Pahartali. A number of agitators were injured, some very seriously. Next day the police enforced 144 Act in the city.

On July 27, on breaking 144 a mammoth gathering was held at Gandhi Maidan. The police dispersed the meeting and arrested Mrs. Nellie Sengupta and others.

Mahatma Gandhi accompanied with Maulana Mohammad Ali came to Chittagong on Wednesday, August 31, 1921, to preach and expound the doctrine of Satyagraha and Khilafat ideology. A mammoth meeting of about 20,000 people was held at Gandhi Maidan. In this meeting Gandhiji urged the audience to learn how to spin with the help of 'charka'. Both the respected leaders called for the deliverance of the country from foreign rule. In this meeting the young volunteers under the leadership of Chandrasekhar De did praiseworthy job. Gandhiji stayed with Sengupta and was guided by Nripen Banarji.<sup>22</sup> Next day Gandhiji and Mohammad Ali left Chittagong at 8 P M.

From the 22nd to the 24th September, 1921 Urmila Devi, sister of Chittaranjan Das gave a series of patriotic speeches in a number of public meetings at different venue, in the town.

At this time the number of political arrests was speeded up. On Sept. 23, 1921, the renowned Khilafat leader Maulvi Abdul

Karim was arrested and sentenced to one year imprisonment. On Sept. 25, J M Sengupta along with a number of agitators was arrested. On Oct. 4, Professor Nripen Banarji and the well known Sikh Guru Kripaldas Udasi were arrested and sentenced to one year imprisonment each.

On October 19, J M Sengupta and others were brought before the court under Police Act, 151 Penal Code and Article 32. Each of them were sentenced to three months imprisonment. Kalisankar Chakravorty (editor of the 'Jyoti') Sukhendu Bikash Sengupta, Premananda Dutta, Serajul Haq, Mahim Chandra Das, Dinananda Swami and others received punishment of imprisonment.

In order to restrain public excitement the authorities decided to transfer J M Sengupta from Chittagong Jail to Alipore Central jail. With this view the prisoners on the 20th October, 1921 were taken to Chittagong Railway Station. A large number of agitators gathered along the road and cried slogans against the transfer. The news paper narrates the events that developed afterwards.

The procession (of the agitators) having reached the approaches of the railway station, a posse of Gurkhas numbering about a hundred and armed with guns.... suddenly sprang upon innocent and peaceful persons with all the savagery they could command. They assaulted right and left anything and everything that came in their way.... It is reported, nearly a hundred persons got bleeding wounds in different parts of their bodies and about 300 persons received aching blows.<sup>23</sup>

On the 24th October, the employees of Assam Bengal Railway did go on strike.

Shortly afterwards, Maulvi Mohammad Kazem Ali, president of the Khilafat Party, Kalisankar Chakravorty (editor, the 'Jyoti'), Md. Serajul Haq were arrested. Mohammad Kazem Ali was sentenced to ten months imprisonment. Shah Badiul Alam, Farrokh Ahmad Nezampuri were arrested and imprisoned.

Prasanna Kumar Sen was sentenced to two and a half year imprisonment, Mokshada Ranjan Kanungo was sentenced to one and half years imprisonment. Tripura Charan Chowdhury and Umesh Chandra Guha were sentenced to one year imprisonment each. They were kept in Alipore jail. Ramesh Charan Rakshit, Jamini Mohan Basu, Ratneswar Chakraborty, Barada Prasad Nandi, Dwijendra Mohan Kundu, Nazir Ahmad Chowdhury suffered imprisonment.<sup>24</sup>

During the Non Cooperation Khilafat movement about 610 persons courted arrest and 488 persons suffered imprisonment of various terms.<sup>25</sup> In a very few other districts in the subcontinent the act of arresting people on mass scale breaking government regulation took place.

On February 12, 1922, Gandhiji called off the Non Co-operation Movement. In March he was arrested. The failure of the Non- Cooperation Khalafat movement gave rise to communal tension. On August 9, lord Lytton visited to Chittagong.

**Growth of Extremism.** The post Non-Co-operation period is marked by the growth of extremism in the struggle for independence.

There were many factors that contributed to the growth of extremism in Chittagong. Some of these are as follows.

During the Non Co-operation movement the activities of the agitators in defiance of government regulation and the cruel measures taken by the government to deal with the agitators brought both the parties face to face with terroristic activities on both sides.

Publication of inflammatory books greatly contributed to the growth of terroristic activites. Among these books, 'Bartaman Rananiti' published by Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya was a practical manual of the revolutionaries dealing with how to make bombs and handling of fire arms.<sup>26</sup> The book has been described by James Campbell Kerr as "the principal revolutionary text book." 'Tarun Bangali' edited by Brajabehari Barman

Roy, 'Jaubaner Dak', 'Fansir Ashirbad' written by Pulakesh De Sarkar, 'Biplaber Boli', 'Taruner Abhisar' written by Bhupendra Nath Raksit Roy, 'Biplaber Pathey Bharat', written by Pulakesh De Sarkar were some of the inflammatory books published during this period. All these books advocate armed rebellion against British rule.

The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the Irish Revolution in 1919 through 1921 greatly encouraged the youths to engage themselves in violent activities.

Pramod Ranjan Chowdhury and Rakhal De two young revolutionaries of Chittagong went to Calcutta to receive training in manufacturing bombs at Daksineswar. According to revolutionary Charu Bikash Dutta, the biographer of Pramod Ranjan, the latter was one of the principal organizers of Daksineswar bomb conspiracy (1925). He was arrested and imprisoned. In collaboration with other prisoners he murdered I B inspector Bhupendra Chatterji in the jailroom. Pramod Ranjan was sentenced to death and Rakhal De was sentenced to life imprisonment. Pramod Ranjan was the first martyr who sacrificed his life for the sake of his country's freedom.

Sukhendu Dutta another youth revolutionary joined Deoghar conspiracy to overthrow the government. The plot was leaked out and Sukhendu along with others was taken captive by police and sentenced to seven years rigorous imprisonment.

The dominance of the political extremism was obvious at the Calcutta session of the Congress held in 1928. A large delegation headed by Surya Sen attended the meeting. In this meeting Surya Sen conversed with Subhash Chandra Bose and some extremists about the political affairs of the district.

In 1928 the great revolutionary Trailokya Maharaj came to Chittagong for revolutionary purposes.

In February, 1929 an organization named the Youth Association was founded by the extremists and Ganesh Ghosh was its general secretary. Another organization named the Students Association was founded at the same time and Lokanath Baul

was its general secretary. Possibly Surya Sen was the president of these two organizations.

The conference arranged by the Chittagong District Congress Committee on May 11 through 13, 1929 indicates the dominance of the extremist group. The conference was presided over by Subhash Chandra Bose. Surya Kumar Sen was its general secretary. The reception committee was presided over by Mahim Chandra Das. The conference was divided into following three sessions. (a) The District Youth conference was presided over by Professor Jyotish Chandra Ghosh and the general secretary was Ganesh Ghosh (b) The district students conference was presided over by Professor Nripendra Chandra Banarji and Lokanath Baul was the president of the reception committee. (c) The district women conference was presided over by Latika Bose. Charubala Duttagupta and Suhasini Mukherji were chief supervisors. Pritilata Wadeddar and Kalpana Dutta were chiefs of the women volunteers. Speeches delivered in the conference were the clear manifestation of the rebellious mood.

According to the report of the armoury raid case, the revolutionaries established six youth clubs in different parts of the town to give training in physical exercises to the youths. These clubs were situated in Sadarghat, Nalapara, Rahamatganj, Brindaban Akhra, Chandanpura and Asadganj.

A Central Physical Culture Association was established in the precincts of Municipal High School with the approval of the chairman of the municipality. Ananta Singh was appointed in January, 1929, its coach with a salary of Rs 50 per month. Lokanath Baul started giving military training to the volunteers in the open space of the J M Sen Hall.<sup>27</sup>

In the clubs revolutionary books and pamphlets were secretly supplied to the youths. In the club meetings the revolutionary leaders pleaded for armed rebellion against the British government. There were free discussions among the club members about the preparation for war against the

government.

The revolutionary leaders laid emphasis on the manufacture of bombs and grenades. Ramkrishna Biswas, Tarakswar Dastidar and Ardhendu Dastidar took the responsibility of making crackers.

According to the armoury raid case report, the house of Ganesh Ghosh was used as a secret store house of weapons, explosives and bombs.

The death of Jatin Das caused by hunger strike created furious excitement all over Bengal. On September 15, 1929 a huge condolence rally was organized by the Youth Association. Surya Sen, Ganeh Ghosh, Ambika Chakravorty, Lokanath Baul, Ananta Singh, Nirmal Sen, Tarakeswar Dastidar, Naresh Roy, Tripura Sen and many others participated in this rally. The procession carried bannars of revolutionary writings. In the condolence meeting that followed inflammatory speeches were given to the attending public.

On September 21, 1929, the annual meeting of the district Congress Party was held to appoint delegates to the central committee. The militant groups gained control over the meeting. Medical practitioner Mahim Chandra Dasgupta was elected president of the district Congress committee. About 300 volunteers armed with sticks were kept ready to face any attack on the part of the opposition group.<sup>28</sup> A serious disturbance followed the conclusion of the meeting. During the skirmish between the two groups in the streets Sukhendu Dutta was mortally wounded and a number of people were injured.

The moderate wing of the district Congress Party organized meetings in support of the civil disobedience at several places. The speakers asked the audience to revive swadeshi spirit and to unitedly resist the foreign domination. In a meeting held in October, 1929 at Shikarpur, Tripura Charan Chowdhury presided over the meeting. Charu Bikash Dutta, Harendra Lal Chowdhury, Mahim Chandra Das and others

addressed the audience to boycott foreign goods.<sup>29</sup>

From the beginning of the year 1930 the radical activities of the extremists were intensified by degree. The residence of Ganesh Ghosh, the Sadarghat club and the Congress office became the principal centres of secret activities.<sup>30</sup> Besides the above mentioned bases, the canteen of Abinash, situated near Sadarghat club played an important part in the communication among the revolutionaries.

In the meeting of the All India Congress Working Committee held on January 2, 1930, "it was decided to observe a day all over India as the Purna Swaraj Day and the 26th January, 1930 was fixed for the purpose."

Accordingly on January 26, 1930 the National Flag was hoisted all over India including Chittagong. The brave youths of Chittagong came forward to translate the Congress declaration for Independence into a reality.

### Civil Disobedience and the Chittagong Revolt (1930-34)

The Congress started the civil disobedience movement on January 26, 1930. Civil disobedience refers to any act of public defiance of a law enforced by the government, to pay taxes and the refusal to obey the administrative rules. Gandhiji clearly states the precise nature of this movement in following words. "A civil revolution, which, however, practised, would mean the end of government authority and open defiance of government and its laws."<sup>31</sup>

The civil disobedience started as a nonviolent movement. J M Sengupta courted arrest while he was reading 'Desher Dak', a proscribed patriotic book in public.

Civil disobedience found its shape in salt satyagraha. In the morning of April 17, 1930 a band of salt satyagrahis started for Kumira to break the Salt Law. The ~~Muslims joined the group~~ of salt satyagrahis.<sup>32</sup> A number of satyagrahis were arrested on ground of the defiance of government's orders.

The extremist group held the view that mere defiance of civil laws was not enough for the attainment of self government; only by way of open rebellion India could be freed from foreign bondage. With this object the extremist group established an organization called revolutionary council. The council organized a body of armed men and named it Indian Republican Army.

The revolutionary council prepared a plan to conduct offensive operations on government establishments. The time and places of actions are also indicated in the plan. Every operation was entrusted to a group and everyone was sworn to secrecy. Absolute secrecy was maintained in the revolutionary affairs. The supreme authorities explained the plan of action to the group members in detail. The plan of action was as follows.

(a) Cutting communication line - The task of cutting the railway line at Laksam was entrusted to a group consisted of Bijoy Aich, Shankar Sarkar and Sushil De under the leadership of Upendra Kumar Bhattacharya. Another group consisted of Subodh Mitra, Sukumar Bhowmik, Sourindra Dutta Chowdhury under the leadership of Lalmohan Sen was sent to cut the railway and telegraph lines at Dhoom.

Another group consisted of Kalipada Chakravorty, Ananda Prasad Gupta, Dwijen Dastidar, Manindra Guha, Biren De, Niranjan Roy under the leadership of Ambika Chakravorty was deputed to conduct an attack on the telegraph office at town.

(b) Raid on the armouries - A group consisted of Himangsu Sen, Saroj Guha, Haripada Mahajan, Devaprasad Gupta under the joint leadership of Ananta Singh and Ganesh Ghosh was entrusted to conduct raid on the police armoury.

Another group consisted of Rajat Sen, Subodh Chowdhury Phanindra Nandi and Jiban Ghoshal under the joint leadership of Nirmal Sen and Lokanath Baul was entrusted to capture the armoury of the auxiliary forces at Pahartali.

(c) Attempt on life of the Europeans in the European club - A group consisted of Tripura Sen, Bidhu Bhattacharya,

Monoranjan Sen, Amarendra Nandi, Harigopal Baul under the command of Naresh Roy was deputed to conduct a surprise attack on the European club.

After the successful operations the revolutionaries assembled in the open space near water works. They made salutation in military gesture to their commander in chief. He took the salute and acknowledged it. He praised the revolutionaries for their daring performances. He then ordered to set fire to the Union Jack and to hoist the national flag. As a sign of respect to the national flag fifty four musketry discharged gunfire three times.

The amazing success of the Chittagong revolutionaries struck the people of the subcontinent with wonder. They were surprised to find how a small group of daring youths could perform such an unbelievable task. Both the press and platform jubilantly congratulated the Chittagong youths on their historic success.<sup>33</sup>

The revolutionaries then proceeded towards north and encamped at Jalalabad hills. On April 22, 1930 they were suddenly surrounded by the government forces on three sides. Then there followed firing from both sides. In this encounter about a dozen youths were either mortally wounded or embraced martyrdom. The martyrs were Nirmal Lala, Harigopal Baul, Naresh Roy, Bidhu Bhattacharya, Pravash Baul, Jiten Dasgupta, Ardhendu Dastidar, Tripura Sen, Pulin Ghosh, Shasanka Dutta, Madhusudan Dutta and Mati Kanungo.

On April 24, Amarendra Nandi a brave Jalalabad fighter died in an encounter with the police. On the 5th and the 6th May Swadesh Roy, Deva Prasad Gupta, Monoranjan Sen and Rajat Sen embraced martyrdom in an encounter with the police. In September, 1930, Jiban Ghoshal was shot dead by the police at Chandan nagar.

On February 6, 1932, Bina Das fired at the Lt. Governor Sir Stanley Jackson while he was delivering the convocation address in the Calcutta University Hall. The Governor was saved

unhurt. Bina Das was arrested and sentenced to nine years imprisonment.

On June 13, 1932 Nirmal Sen, a leading revolutionary was shot dead in a serious encounter with the police.

In September 1932 a group of revolutionaries under the leadership of Pritilata Waddedar conducted a surprise raid on the European Club at Pahartali. A number of the Europeans were either killed or injured. Pritilata committed suicide to escape from police arrest.

In February 1933 Surya Sen and Tarakeswar Dastidar were held captive.

In order to crush the uprising and to take the revolutionaries captive the government employed a large police force in every part of the district. A number of coercive Acts were successively passed prescribing fines and imprisonment for alleged participation in the revolt. Severe penalties including death sentence and transportation for life were pronounced at random. The penal laws, enacted by the authorities imposed civil disabilities on suspects and youths all over the district. A large number of persons who were suspected of antigovernment activities were put in jail for months together but not brought to trial.

The revolutionary activities in Chittagong began to subside in the second half of the year 1934. The leading revolutionaries were either killed or captured. The large scale arrests of the revolutionaries virtually brought the revolt to an end.

The Chittagong revolt was a war of liberation, liberation from the bondage of foreign rule. Revolutionary Ananda Gupta very aptly writes, "Our surcharged mind was hungry for a new identity—an identity which is free from the curse of age old cowardice, which refuses to submit to the humiliation of servile existence."<sup>34</sup>

Mass agitation against the government's oppressive laws

and unjust taxation characterized the freedom movement in the latter part of the 1930s. An organization of agitators named Chattagram Damanniti Birodh Samiti was established in 1937 to put political pressure on the government to withdraw severe laws and to release detenus.

A meeting of the Samiti was held in November 1937 at the Bar Library. Major G L H Hyde presided over the meeting. Early release of the political prisoners and providing relief measures for the families of released detenus were some of the demands that have asked for.

Public meetings were held in different places of the district to mobilize public opinion against unjust political and economic policies of the government.

On January 8, 1938 a large public protest meeting was held at the J M Sen Hall. The meeting was presided over by Mahim Chandra Das. The municipality chairman Mr. Nur Ahmad, Golam Sobhan, Tripura Charan Chowdhury, Ambika Charan Das, Barada Prasad Nandi and other prominent leaders addressed the meeting. Sometime later a large meeting of public protest was held at Patiya.

On January 22, 1938 a public meeting in support of the campaign against government policy was organized in the village Habilasdwip. The meeting was presided over by Ekramul Haq. The meeting was addressed by poet Muhammad Ibrahim, Bankim Dutta, Ranadhir Dasgupta, Fakir Sen and others.

In all these meetings the speakers and the audience urged the government to make an early release of the detenus and to withdraw unfair and oppressive taxes.

The youth movement became more forceful during this period. Establishment of the Student Association and the Student Federation was a great step towards revolutionizing the youth movement. The Students Federation was founded in 1937. Its aim was to express strong objection against the education cess. It also urged the government not to implement

Secondary Education Bill on which the people strongly disagreed with the government.

The visit of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose to Chittagong in June, 1938 imparted fresh vigour to the Independence movement. He addressed several meetings organized in his honour by the Congress Party and youth forums. In each of the meetings he paid tribute of praise to the revolutionary spirit of the people of Chittagong.

On July 9, 1938 a student conference was held with the participation of a large number of students. Professor Humayun Kabir, the president of the Congress Socialist Party and Biswanath Mukherji, the secretary of the Bengal Provincial Students Federation were invited to be present in the meeting. Both of them accepted the invitation. Professor Humayun Kabir delivered an inspiring speech at the meeting. Biswanath Mukherji hoisted the flag of the Students Federation.

On July 23, 1938, Suresh Banarji, president of the All India Trade Union Congress gave an eloquent speech on the right to protest against government action in a large meeting called in honour of him in the J M Sen Hall.

**Quit India Movement.** The Independence movement gained renewed vigour in 1942. This movement is known as Quit India movement. It was started by Gandhiji on the 9th August, 1942 demanding that the British should quit India transferring administrative power to the Indians. The movement is also known as the August movement.

The Quit India resolution declared "that the immediate ending of the British rule in India is an urgent necessity, both for the sake of India and for the success of the cause of the United Nations."<sup>35</sup>

The important leaders of the Quit India movement in Chittagong were Jnanananda Swami, Barada Prasad Nandi, Rajkumar Chakraborty, Sanjib Prasad Sen. They were arrested by the police for breaking government regulation. On account

of the severe famine in the district the people did not take part in greater number in this movement.

Besides the political movement, the leftists organized a peasant movement called the Tebhaga Movement which was directed in favour of the peasants' demand for greater share of crops which they produce.

**The Azad Hind Fauj.** To free the country from the British control a liberation army called Azad Hind Fauj was formed in South East Asia. The leader of the Azad Hind Fauj in Chittagong was Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi. He secretly met with Subhas Chandra Bose in Burma. The bases for their activities were established in Sitakunda and Chakaria with great secrecy.

The progress of the Azad Hind Fauj inside India caused much rejoicings in the country. But the withdrawal of the Japanese troops from the warfield made the situation difficult and the Azad Hind Fauj was forced to retreat from the occupied areas.

#### **Note :**

- 1 Buckland, *op. cit.*, p. 67
- 2 Qt. Hunter, *op.cit.*, p. 122
- 3 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 122
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 123
- 6 Shishir Kar, *op. cit.*, p. 80
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 263
- 8 *Education Gazette*, 1918, p. 99
- 9 *Jugadharma*, July, 1935, p. 23
- 10 The *Bengalee*, Feb. 9, 1898, p. 86
- 11 The *Dhaka Prakash*, Chaitra 8, 1309, p. 2
- 12 Muntasir Mamun, *Bangabhang O Purbabange Pratikriya*, p. 19
- 13 *Indian Nation*, Oct. 5, 1903

- 14 The *Panchajanya*, 1345, p. 105
- 15 S. B. Qanungo, *British Birodh Andolane Chattagram*, p. 35
- 16 The *Education Gazette*, Feb, 3, 1911
- 17 The *Panchajanya*, 1345, p. 105
- 18 The *Bande Mataram*, Feb, 27, 1907, qt. Sumit Sarkar.  
..... *the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, p. 377
- 19 Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p. 356
- 20 The *Panchajanya*, 1345
- 21 RAB, 1920, p. iii
- 22 Nripen Banarji, *At the Crossroads*, pp. 163-66
- 23 The *Young India*, Nov. 3, 1921
- 24 The *Panchajanya*, Autumn Number, 1345
- 25 The *Jyoti*, 1336, No. 1, p. 31
- 26 Gordon, op. cit., p. 175
- 27 *Armoury Raid Case Report*.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 The *Bangla Gazette*, 1929
- 30 *Armoury Raid Case Report*
- 31 RAB, 1920, p. iv
- 32 The *Bangla Gazette*, 1930
- 33 The *Swadhinata*, Baisakh 11, 1337
- 34 *Challenge, A Saga of Struggle for India's Freedom*, p. 88
- 35 J S Sharma, *India's Struggle for Freedom*, III, 817

## Chapter 9

### Education

Chittagong has been a celebrated centre of learning since a long time ago. In ancient period, the fame of the Pandita Vihara as a seat of learning spread as far as Tibet. The medieval period gave birth to such erudite scholars as Pundarik Vidyanidhi and Jatadhar Acharya.

Referring to the system of elementary education previous to the British rule, L S S O'Malley writes,

Chittagong has long been a district in which indigenous schools have flourished such as village pathsalas in which children are taught reading, writing and a little mathematics, maktaba in which Muhammadan children recite the Koran by rote and Magh kyang or monastic schools where a Buddhist rauli or priest is the teacher.<sup>1</sup>

This system of education continued without any major change to the early part of 1830s.

In 1834 Lord William Bentinck following the recommendation of Lord Macaulay introduced the teaching of English in schools.

To facilitate the English education in the district an organization named General Committee of Public Instructions was formed. Majority of the members were the Europeans who pleaded for the establishment of an English school modelled on English system as early as possible.

Chittagong Zilla English School. Under the auspices of General Committee of Public Instructions an English school (commonly called Chittagong Zilla School) was established in the town in 1836.<sup>2</sup> The object of the establishment of the school was the expansion of knowledge and the improvement of qualities of mind by a course of formal education through the

medium of English. The school was an independent institution and was managed by itself. The school achieved good reputation as the best educational institution in the district. Almost all the renowned persons belonging to the nineteenth century received education in this school. The school was affiliated with the Calcutta University after its establishment in 1856.

In 1869 the school was upgraded in order to give teaching in First Arts or college preparatory course to the students. Thus the F A course was joined on to the entrance school (Zilla School) and formed a part of it.

Two non government schools were established in the beginning of the 1870s. These were Albert English School and Queens School. According to Hunter, "The most important school not under government is the Albert English school in the town of Chittagong. It was started in order to relieve the pressure on the Government Zilla school, which was not large enough for the numbers who sought admission."<sup>3</sup> W W Hunter did not give detailed description of the Queens School.

Poet Nabin Chandra Sen the then Deputy Magistrate of Chittagong was not in favour of the individualized existence of these two schools, which in his view were of poor quality in regard to the method of teaching. He abolished these two schools and allowed them to be amalgamated with the Chittagong High School.<sup>4</sup>

**Indigenous institutions.** There were four categories of indigenous institutions, all of which were free from government control and were privately managed. W W Hunter gives the following description of the different types of indigenous institutions that were in existence in the middle of the nineteenth century.

A. Pathsala or Bengali elementary institution. In 1871-72, "there were reported to be 107 Bengali Pathsalas beyond the reach of inspection by the educational officers."<sup>5</sup> Pathsalas existed in large number in central Chittagong. Hunter writes, "In the central police circles there is said to be hardly a

village in which there is not at least one pathsala."<sup>6</sup>

B. Maktab or institution giving Muslim religious instruction. In 1871-72" there were reported to be 110 Persian or Arabic maktabs....beyond the reach of inspection by the educational officers."<sup>7</sup>

In a madrasa, students go to receive higher learning for a degree. One of the madrasas of good fame was Mir Yahya's Madrasa which was established in the latter part of the 18th century. Mr Pogson while visiting this institution in 1831 saw 140 students taking instructions in Arabic and Persian.

C. Tol (institutions) for Sanskrit and Hindu religious studies. Pandits who received higher education in Banaras, Nabadwip and other noteworthy places of Sanskrit learning were given preference in teaching the students in a tol. In 1871-72 "there were reported to be 20 Sanskrit tols beyond the reach of inspection by the education officers."<sup>8</sup>

D. Tol for Buddhist education divided into two categories; (a) kyang based institutions for the tribal Buddhists and (b) tol for the Bengalee Buddhists. Regarding the Buddhist system of education Hunter writes.

In Chittagong District there are also about 30 Magh Khions where some 750 boys are taught by the rauli or priests; five of the Khions are in the Sadar Subdivision among a Rajbansi population; and in them Bengali is taught. The rest are in the Cox's Bazar Subdivision and their construction and character is of the regular Burmese type.<sup>9</sup>

These institutions were neither government aided nor government inspected.

Regarding the indigenous system of education, Hunter quoted a passage from the commissioner's statement.

In 1874 the commissioner reported that there were then 'no less than 1480 indigenous and unaided schools of various kinds, not under government supervision or control; and in these schools no less than 23, 953 pupils receive instruction - that is about three times the number of pupils to be

found in the inspected and aided schools of the district.<sup>10</sup>

These institutions were conducted by private individuals who taught their pupils usually at their own residences. The medium of instruction was generally in Bengali and in some cases in the local dialect. These schools were out of government control. Government had nothing to do with the fitness of the teachers.

The indigenous schooling underwent gradual decline from the 1880s.. In 1891, 9303 pupils studied in 575 indigeneous schools.<sup>11</sup> In 1901 there were 745 private institutions with 14,023 pupils.<sup>12</sup> Following statistical information gives evidence of the continuous decrease in the number of 'unrecognised' schools and the students studying at these schools.<sup>13</sup>

Year	Number of Schools	Number of Pupils
1921-22	432	6888
1922-23	164	3360
1923-24	147	2216
1924-25	113	2486
1925-26	207	4589
1926-27	191	4666
1927-28	130	4569
1928-29	118	3969
1929-30	143	2613
1930-31	158	3992

Most of these unrecognized institutions were maktab

Government aided vernacular schools. It was the government policy to bring privately managed indigenous schools under government supervision. This kind of schools were known as vernacular schools. People of all communities were very much pleased with the government's decision. Regarding the Muslim participation in the vernacular school, Hunter writes, "The Muhammadans attend the government vernacular schools in considerable numbers and additional

instruction in Persian and Arabic is provided for the benefit of Muhammadans at the Chittagong District schools.”<sup>14</sup>

The failure of the government to give due attention to the Buddhist tols gave rise to the discontentment among the Buddhist community. They urged the government to pay proper attention to the Buddhist indigenous institutions. “In 1938-39 the government sanctioned Rs 5000/- for the Buddhist tols for the first time.”<sup>15</sup>

There were a few advanced type of vernacular schools called middle vernacular schools, which, however, lost popularity with the students in 1920s. The list<sup>16</sup> of the government aided middle vernacular schools gives evidence of it.

Year	Number of Schools	Number of Pupils
1921-22	2	86
1922-23	2	99
1923-24	1	39
1924-25	1	38
1925-26	1	36
1926-27	1	38

Middle vernacular school ceased to exist after 1927.

### Introduction of primary education

Government grant-in-aid primary schools. The government placed special importance on elementary education in 1870s. Sir George Campbell’s scheme for the diffusion of primary education marks the establishment of government aided primary schools in ever increasing number in all parts of the district. In the year 1871 there were 38 grant in aid schools attended by 1473 pupils. Upto the 31st March, 1873 there existed 45 schools with 1,512 attending pupils.<sup>17</sup> In 1881 the total number of schools was 337 and the number of pupils was 12,311. In 1891 total number of schools rose to as many as 1007 with the total number of pupils 32,686. In 1901 there were altogether 1108 primary schools with an attendance of 43,182 pupils.<sup>18</sup>

The following statistics<sup>19</sup> supplied by government records show the upward trend in the establishment of primary schools and the number of pupils.

Year	Number of Schools	Number of Pupils
1901	1022	-
1911	1201	-
1921-22	2062	67,785
1922-23	2324	73,746
1923-24	2725	82,290
1924-25	3083	97,783
1925-26	3115	98,964
1926-27	3210	101,158
1927-28	33,84	103,753
1928-29	3475	108,575
1929-30	3657	115740
1930-31	3721	120373

From the time of the establishment of primary schools in the 1870s the number of schools was gradually increasing. In the early part o the 1930s almost all villages were furnished with one or two primary schools.

Primary schools were classified into two categories, upper primary schools and lower primary schools. An upper primary school was equivalent to a lower primary school with two additional higher classes.

The primary schools in 1931 were categorized as follows : managed by government-6, managed by municipalities and District Board - 208, under private management but aided by government and District and Municipal Boards - 3,296, under private management and unaided-211. (Total-3721).<sup>20</sup>

**Compulsory free primary education.** To provide elementary education for the children without tuition fees, the Chittagong municipality and the Chittagong district board did a commendable job. Mr. Nur Ahmad, chairman of the municipality and a member of the legislative council showed great

capacity of making the primary education compulsory and free in the Chittagong town.

Since the introduction of primary education there has been a gradual increase in the number of primary schools and attending pupils in the town area.

In 1900 there were only seven primary schools for boys attended by 284 pupils in Chittagong town. The municipality granted Rs 490 to these schools.

In 1905 a maktab for girls was established in Alkaran mainly to teach the girls the recitation of the Holy Quran.

In 1923 the Chittagong town contained 32 schools for boys and 12 schools for girls. The number of pupils attending the schools were 1248 boys and 454 girls.

In 1925 the municipality took over the management of the primary schools to its own hand. A scheme of free primary education was sent to the government to be granted. At that time Mr. Nurul Islam Chowdhury was sub inspector of educational institutions. He promised to Mv. Nur Ahmad, the chairman of the municipality to look into the matter and assured him of financial assistance in materializing the scheme. In September, 1927, the scheme was granted by the government. On January 2, 1928, free primary education was introduced. For the proper management of the schools a school committee was formed.<sup>21</sup> According to the government report,

This municipality was the first to introduce free and compulsory primary education for boys within its area. The standard of education imparted is reported to have considerably improved. The number of boys in the higher classes has also substantially increased during year under report.<sup>22</sup>

There appeared many loopholes in implementing compulsory primary education. People did not wholeheartedly co-operate with the municipality authorites. Mv. Nur Ahmad acknowledged his difficulties in this attempt. In the provincial council he says, "From that date (1928) we have prosecuted

about 300 to 400 defaulting persons every year but owing to loopholes in that Act (The Bengal Primary Education Act) not a single person could be punished.”<sup>23</sup>

Extra academic programmes such as boys scouting annual sports, physical exercises, prize giving ceremony and cultural functions were introduced in these schools.

Since the introduction of compulsory free primary education in 1928 the number of boys attending the schools increased from 1052 to 2500 and the girls increased from 1052 to 1332 in 1929.<sup>25</sup>

In its election manifesto in 1937 the Krishak Praja Party declared their objective for compulsory free primary education. In the election the party gained victory and formed ministry. Mv. Nur Ahmad asked the education minister to give an approximate estimate “for the introduction of the free and compulsory primary education in the rural areas of the Chittagong District.”<sup>26</sup>

During the Second World War the government faced acute financial stringency. The government could not provide financial assistance necessary for the maintenance of primary schools. As a result a large number of primary schools were closed down. In reply to Mv. Nur Ahmad’s enquiry about the number of the abolished institutions the minister replied that “primary schools numbering 1083 have been abolished.”<sup>27</sup> Most of the abolished primary schools, however, were reopened after the world war was over.

**Normal School.** In order to improve the quality, method and system of teaching in the primary schools, the government established normal schools. The first normal school was established in Chittagong towards the end of the 19th century and it gained a good reputation. In later times normal school was replaced by teachers training college.

**District Primary Teachers Association.** It was established in 1936. A meeting of the District Primary and Maqtab Teach-

ers Association was held in October, 1937 in the Municipal High School premises. Various problems of the primary teaching were discussed and some proposals were adopted in the meeting.

Middle English School. "A Middle (English) School" writes O'malley "represents all stages from the Lower Primary to the 5th class of High Schools.... A Middle School is equivalent to an Upper Primary School with two higher classes attached to it."<sup>28</sup> The following numerical information about the middle english school as officially collected is given below.

Year	Number of institutions	Number of pupils
1901	17	-
1911	28	-
1921-22	64	5398
1922-23	60	5301
1923-24	56	5306
1924-25	57	5649
1925-26	61	6512
1926-27	58	6430
1927-28	62	7202
1928-29	68	8042
1929-30	69	8239
1930-31	73	8366

The total number of middle english schools in 1931 was 73. The different types of these institutions were classified as follows : Managed by government-1; managed by municipalties and District Board-2; under private management but aided by government, District or Municipal Board-55; under private management and unaided-15.<sup>29</sup>

High English School. As regards the High English School, O'Malley writes,

The High English Schools teach upto the Entrance Examination of the Calcutta University.... A High School thus

represents all stages of instruction from the Lower Primary to the University Entrance Examination standard. In brief a High School is a Middle School with four additional higher classes.<sup>30</sup>

In 1901 there were three categories of High English Schools in Chittagong. (A) Government maintained High Schools (B) Government aided High Schools and (C) unaided High Schools. The number of High English Schools has increased as follows.

1911 - 11

1921 - 34

1931 - 39

High English Schools and Middle English schools "have primary departments attached to them." English was the medium of both instruction and examination.

The number of High English Schools in 1931 were divided into following categories. Managed by government-3; managed by municipalities and District Board-1; under private management but aided by government; District or Municipal Board-25, under private management and unaided-10.

Some of the High English Schools improved remarkably in the quality of teaching and the students of those schools scored good results in the Matriculation Examination.

**District Teachers Association.** This was a non-government organization of school teachers to safeguard the teachers' interests. In 1930s Surya Kumar Sen of Patiya High School and Moksada Ranjan Biswas were president and secretary respectively.

**Missionary Institutions.** In order to provide general and religious education for the Christian children, Christian missionaries established missionary schools in Chittagong as early as the 18th century. In the 19th century modern method of general education was introduced in these schools.

St. Placids School, the most important missionary institution was established in 1841. Since that time dedicated European missionaries are being appointed head of the institution. Non Christian boys were allowed admission in the institution. It was affiliated with the Calcutta University in the beginning of the twentieth century. It gained reputation of being an institution of good teaching and the system of rules for conduct to be followed by the students. On January 27, 1938 members of the Boy Scouts of the school demonstrated their skill on the occasion of the school ceremony. General Lindsay was present on this occasion.

In the latter part of the 19th century a girl school named St. Scholasticus was established. It assumed an important role in women's education in the urban area.

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries progressive Bengalees shew interest in the quality of instruction in these missionary institutions.

**Women education.** Female education movement was started by the progressive social reformers in 1870s. Dr. Annada Charan Khastagir acted as a pioneer in female education especially in Chittagong.

According to W W Hunter, "the Chittagong Association patronizes some five or six girls.schools in the interior of the district."<sup>31</sup> He, however, made no mention in his 'Accounts' the places in which the girls schools were established.

**Dr. Khastagir Girls School.** The first girls school instructing in modern methods was established in 1878, under the auspices of the elite society of the town. Dr. Annada Charan Khastagir was connected with the foundation of the school. "It was raised to Middle English School in March 22, 1903."<sup>32</sup>

The academic extension needed the construction of new buildings and the new construction required more land. The land for construction of buildings was donated by Jatra Mohan Sen. The school is named after Dr. Annada Charan Khastagir,

one of the foremost fighters of women's rights.

The status of a high English school was given to it in 1907. There were, however, not many students in the higher classes. In 1929 there were only nine students in class X.

More lands were acquired by the school in subsequent times. In 1939 Maulvi Nur Ahmad, chairman of the municipality informed the legislative council that "a piece of land was acquired one year ago for the extension of the Dr. Khastagir High English School."<sup>33</sup>

People of the Chittagong town asked the government for starting Intermediate (I A) classes in the school. The municipality authorities adopted a resolution expressing the same view.<sup>34</sup>

Two other girls English High Schools were established in the early part of the twentieth century. The Aparna Charan Girls High English School was established in 1927. The Gulezar Begam High School was established in 1929. The number of students in these girls schools was very much low. Girls frequently dropped out from school while going to upper classes.

A few non-government girls high schools were established in the rural areas of the district during the closing years of the British rule. Owing to the absence of girls high schools girls received their education at home under private tutors. Female candidates for the Matriculation Examination had to appear at the examination as private candidates.

The All India Moslem Educational Conference, held in Calcutta in December 1939, adopted a resolution to establish a senior madrasa for girls at Chittagong town. Maulvi Nur Ahmad brought this resolution to the notice of the government.<sup>35</sup>

The Chittagong municipality undertook a project for the introduction of compulsory free primary education for girls in the latter part of the 1920s. The project, however, could not be implemented owing to the strong opposition of the public, especially its orthodox section. The municipality, however, did

not abandon the project. According to the government report, in 1930 the Chittagong municipality was "trying to introduce a scheme for free and compulsory primary education for girls."<sup>36</sup>

In 1938 the primary education for girls of the age between 6 to 10 was made compulsory. People of all walks of life, government and press praised Chairman Nur Ahmad for his strenuous efforts to diffuse primary education among the girls.

**Co-educational system of education.** Co-educational schools are those where girls and boys are taught together. Co-education is almost universal in primary and college levels, but in secondary stage the system was neither popular nor extensive. Among the co-educational schools Saroatali P C Sen High English School is the most important institution. The school was named after its founder Barrister Purna Chandra Sen a renowned social worker of his times.

**Technical School.** In 1931 there were 9 technical schools<sup>37</sup> in Chittagong; under management of government-1, under private management but aided by government-8.

**Night School.** Programmes for the extension of educational opportunities to the adults especially belonging to the labourer class were taken as early as the Swadeshi period.<sup>38</sup> It is stated that Keshab Chandra Sen, the great Brahma leader in his residence first started night school for the benefit of the labourer class. To spread education among the labourer class a welfare organization named Sramajibi Shiksa Parishad was established. Under its auspices night schools were established in many villages.<sup>39</sup> The Khademul Islam Society conducted a few night schools.<sup>40</sup> Mv. Nur Ahmad, chairman of the municipality pleaded for the establishment of night schools to spread education among the labourer class.

**Training school.** In order to increase the efficiency of the teachers and to train them for their profession training schools were established. In 1931 there were two training schools in Chittagong. All of these were managed by government.<sup>41</sup> To develop skills in their profession the teachers of

indigenous elementary schools were given the opportunity for receiving Guru training course.

**Government inspection.** To supervise the educational institutions the post of inspector of schools was created by the government towards the end of the 19th century. According to O'Malley, the office of Inspector of schools was established in the town.<sup>42</sup> Under the inspector six sub inspectors of schools and eleven inspecting Pandits were appointed. Middle upper primary schools were under the supervision of the sub inspectors. The indigenous schools were under the supervision of the inspecting Pandits.

**Higher education.** After passing Entrance Examination students got themselves admitted in the colleges in order to receive university degrees. Upto the end of the British rule there were three colleges in Chittagong.

**Chittagong College.** In order to help the students to receive higher education Chittagong College was established. According to the Calcutta University Report, "In 1869 the Zilla School was upgraded to second grade College to provide education upto First Arts. J C Bose was the first Principal of the College."<sup>43</sup> Jatra Mohan Sen was the first student who passed F A from this institution. F A course was, however, discontinued in 1872 owing to the financial crisis. At this time, poet Nabin Chandra Sen was the deputy magistrate of the district. Dr. Annada Charan Khastagir, the great social reformer put pressure on Nabin Chandra Sen to help reopen the college. With the help of the donation of money by Babu Golok Chandra Roy Chowdhury and with the joint efforts of poet Nabin Chandra Sen and Dr. Khastagir the college resumed its academic activities in 1872 after a few months interruption.

From the beginning, Chittagong College was under the control of the government. The college was in reality an upgradation of the government Zilla School. Therefore, the college needed no formal announcement about its being as a government-controlled institution.

Besides the Arts departments, there were provisions for teaching law.

In 1901 the teaching staff consisted of a principal and five lecturers.

In 1909 the science section of the college was opened to admit students.

In 1910 the college was given the status of a first grade degree college. Graduation classes started in this year.

In 1919 Golden Jubilee of the college was celebrated.

There was steady increase of students during 1920s as is evident in the following staistics.<sup>44</sup>

Year			Number of students
1921	....	....	353
1922	....	....	455
1923	....	....	546
1924	....	....	537
1925	....	....	604

Syed Maqbul Husain expresses deep concern in the legislative council about the shortage of facilities in proportion of "the ever increasing number of students" in the college.<sup>45</sup>

To improve the academic quality a 'Research Society' was established in January, 1923. In the first two years as many as thirty learned papers were read and discussed.<sup>46</sup>

A scheme was adopted by the government "for the improvement and expansion of the science laboratory of the Chittagong College." Its implication was, however, postponed owing to the break up of the Second World War.<sup>47</sup>

The Chittagong College remained closed for about three years due to the warlike preparations during the Second World war. The college was reopened in the beginning of the year 1945.

The Chittagong College may justly feel proud of its being as one of the leading educational institutions of the province

during the British period. Many of the notable persons of Chittagong were the students of this institution.

**Chittagong Islamic Intermediate College.** The Mohsenia Madrasa started giving English education in 1926-27 and opened up Intermediate in Arts to the students on experimental basis. The institution was named Islamic Intermediate College.

It required about a decade to make the intermediate stage permanent. Mr H S Suhrawardi while replying to an enquiry about the status of the college in 1939 said that "the intermediate classes attached to the Chittagong madrasah have been made permanent."<sup>48</sup>

**Sir Ashutosh College.** This is in order of time, the second college in the district and the first college in the rural area. It was established in the village Kanungopara in 1939 to provide education for the people in rural area. The degree classes were started in 1941. In 1944 Honours Course in a few subjects was introduced. In 1945 science and commerce subjects were included in the course of study. The college gained a reputation for creating an enlightened society in the attached area.

### Indigenous institutions for higher Education

**A. Madrasas of higher education.** Madrasas of higher learning were established in different parts of the district by private enterprise. Reputed Muslim scholars were given appointment to teach the students. Academic degrees were conferred on the successful students. Examination results were published in the newspapers and the degrees were recognized by the government.

The oldest madrasa giving modern method of teaching was Mohsenia Madrasa which was founded in 1874 under the auspices of Haji Muhammad Mohsin Endowment Fund. In 1913, 50 students passed their examinations. The institution was converted to Islamic Intermediate College in 1926-27.

In 1901 there were three advanced type of madrasas in the district. The number of madrasas increased to 11 in 1911.<sup>49</sup> "In 1915 Madrasas and Maktabs alike increased in number and were more frequented than during the previous year."<sup>50</sup> Some of the madrasas of good reputation are mentioned below.

The Sitakunda Madrasa was established by Maulana Obaidul Haq a renowned educationist and social worker in the beginning of the 20th century. Shortly after wards, it was turned to a senior madrasa. The results of the examinations were published in the Education Gazette.

The Chittagong government Madrasa was established in 1909. The English method of teaching was introduced in the madrasa and was renamed Chittagong Government Muslim High School in 1916.

The Dar ul Ulum Madrasa, established in 1913 was one of the foremost madrasas in Chittagong. According to the government report, "this madrasa receives the highest grant among old scheme Madrasa in Chittagong Division."<sup>52</sup>

Besides these, there were three other advanced type of madrasas which gained provincial repute. These are Hathazari Madrasa, Mirsarai Latifia Madrasa and Chunati Madrasa, Satkania.

The New Scheme Madrassa system designed by Mr. Stapleton gained government favour. In Chittagong many madrasas adopted the new scheme madrasa system. In most cases a madrasa was an autonomous institution which managed its own affairs.

**B. Sanskrit institutions for higher learning.** There were a few advanced type of Sanskrit institutions with power to grant degrees. The foremost among these institutions was Chittagong Sanskrit College, established in 1914. Its founder principal was Rajani Kanta Sahityacharya, a Sanskrit scholar of high repute. Learned teachers were engaged to instruct the students. There was no bar of caste or creed of being admitted

to the college. The course of teaching consisted of grammar (Vyakaran or Kalap), classical literature (Sahitya), logic (Nyaya), theology (Smriti), tarka (oratory) and Hindu philosophy (Darshan).

Three successive stages of Sanskrit teaching, Adya, Madhya and Upadhi examinations were held in the month of Chaitra (March) every year and titles were awarded to the successful candidates every year. Honorific titles were ceremoniously conferred on eminent persons. Students and teachers were provided with free food and lodging. The college was government aided and government stipends were granted to the meritorious students for their academic performance.

Lt. governor Lord Carmichael visited the college in 1916 and assured the college authorities of financial assistance to the development of the college. Rajani Kanta Sahityacharya was succeeded by Umacharan Tarkaratna. He held the post till his death in 1938.<sup>53</sup>

The Jagatpur Ashram was a noteworthy Sanskrit educational institution which followed traditional course of study.<sup>54</sup> Basanti Devi (1284-1349 BE) a student of brilliant academic career in the tol of the Ashram was awarded highest title in Sanskrit. The tol authorities gave her appointment as a teacher in the tol. She was an erudite scholar and held superior position in the teaching staff of the tol.<sup>55</sup>

**Medical School.** Establishment of a medical school was a long standing demand of the people of Chittagong.

In August 1927 the Lt. Governor while visiting the district announced that a medical school was going to be established in Chittagong. A sum of Rs 75000 was allotted for this purpose. But till July 1928 no construction work was undertaken. Syed Maqbul Husain, a member of the legislative council expressed his concern about the delay.<sup>56</sup> The provincial minister Kumar Shivashekhareswar Roy Bahadur favourably responded to the demand of the member of the council.<sup>57</sup> The construction work of the medical school building began in November, 1928.<sup>58</sup> The superintending engineer

informed the civil surgeon that the construction of the building would be completed by March 1930 and ready for teaching service by July 1930.<sup>59</sup>

On July 2, 1930 the medical school was formally opened by the authorities. The successive courses of study were LMF, Intermediate and Final. Candidates had to pass each stage of study to achieve academic rank.<sup>60</sup>

**Residence for the students.** In the beginning of the twentieth century two residential hostels, one for the Hindu and one for the Buddhist students were constructed attached to the Chittagong College.<sup>61</sup> It is not known what type of buildings these were. It seems that both these buildings ceased to exist in early 1930s.

In 1933 Rai Bahadur Kamini Kumar Das in the legislative council says that, "There is no hostel at Chittagong for Hindu students of the Chittagong College." The representatives of the Chittagong Association waited on the Director of Public Instruction regarding the construction of a Hindu hostel shortly before the council session.<sup>62</sup>

In or around the year 1900 a boarding house for Muslim students named Islamia Boarding was established by Maulvi Abdul Aziz.

A student hostel for Muslim students of the Chittagong College was officially opened in the month of February, 1926. the hostel accommodated 60 students.<sup>63</sup>

A Buddhist hostel was constructed around the year 1940. Mr. Dharendra Lal Barua in the legislative council requested the government to increase requirement facilities for both school and college student boarders.<sup>55</sup>

**Conferences on education.** The leading Muslim citizens from time to time attended the conferences to discuss the progress in education and to adopt resolutions to improve the educational standards of the institutions.

In 1899 an organization named Chittagong Education

Society was established by Maulvi Abdul Aziz, a prominent social worker, aiming to help spread of education among the Muslim society.<sup>65</sup>

A meeting of Bengal Provincial Muhammadan Education Conference was held at Chittagong on the 18th and 19th April, 1930. The following resolutions were adopted in the meeting.

1. Introduction of religious education in all schools
2. Improvement of madrasa education (both old and new scheme)
3. Setting apart in the annual budget a definite sum of money annually for furtherance of Musalman education
4. Representation of the Muslims in the executive and administrative bodies of the universities.
5. Creation of a faculty of Islamic studies
6. Representation of the Muslims in the tutorial staff of the universities and in all government colleges and schools
7. Spending education fund of the District Board among the different communities in proportion to their ratio in the population of the district
8. Fixing the number of Muslims in the Training Colleges
9. Observing the month of Ramzan as holidays and urging the university not to have any examination in that month

The above resolutions were communicated to Hon'ble Khwaja Nazimuddin who assured the delegates of the government support.<sup>66</sup>

In 1931 the Muhammadan Education Society was established to promote higher education among the Muslims. The president of the society was Mr. Hodge, I.C.S. CIE and the secretary was Khan Bahadur Jalaluddin Ahmad B A B L.

On the basis of the discussions in the meeting of the Bouddha Mahasamiti held on March 12 and 13, 1938 the following proposals related to the improvement of educational facilities among the Buddhist community were adopted.

1. To recognize the Buddhist monastic education by the grant of government subsidies
2. To encourage general and vocational education amongst the Buddhists by the provision of stipends and special scholarships
3. To encourage women's education in the Buddhist community by the establishment of schools in predominantly Buddhist villages
4. To give appropriate representation of the Buddhists in the management committees of different educational institutions

The meeting agreed to move these proposals to the government for consideration. Dr. Arabinda Barua, a member of the legislative council brought these proposals to the notice of the government in 1939 and the minister assured him of the favourable consideration.<sup>67</sup>

The Chittagong Division Educational Week was ceremoniously celebrated on the 4th April through the 8th April, 1937 at St. Placids School ground. The Bishop of Chittagong inaugurated the ceremony. The district magistrate Mr. Whitaker presided over the teachers conference held in this connection. About 250 delegates from the schools of the Chittagong Division attended the conference. An exhibition of vocational training added attraction to the conference.<sup>68</sup>

Libraries contribute very much to the spread of education among the people of the district. A number of libraries were established both in the town and in the progressive villages in the early part of the 20th century. In these libraries books, newspapers and periodicals were kept for people to read. Among the academic libraries the Municipal Public Library was most important. There were also a number of religious libraries. Scriptural texts and religious books were stored in the rooms attached to the kyangs and the mosques.

**Note :**

- 1 O'Malley, *op. cit.*
- 2 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 219
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 220
- 4 See the poet's autobiography
- 5 Hunter, *op.cit.*, p. 220
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp 220-21
- 10 *Ibid.*, p 220
- 11 O'Malley, *op.cit*
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 *Chittagong District Gazetteer*, p. 19
- 14 Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-20
- 15 *ORBLC*, 1939, pp. 314-15
- 16 *C D G*, p. 19
- 17 Hunter, *op. cit.* p. 219
- 18 O'Malley, *op.cit.*
- 19 *C D G*, p. 19
- 20 *Ibid.* p. 20
- 21 The *Bangla Gazette*, 1930
- 22 *RAB*, 1935-36, p. 89
- 23 *ORBLC*, 1941, pp. 426-27
- 24 The *Bangla Gazette*, 1930
- 25 *Ibid.*, 1929
- 26 *ORBLC*, 1939, p. 398
- 27 *Ibid.*, 1942, p. 19
- 28 O'Malley, *op.cit.*
- 29 *C D G*, p. 20
- 30 O'Malley, *op.cit.*
- 31 Hunter, *op cit.*, p. 211
- 32 The *Panchajanya*, Autumn Number 1345, p. 105
- 33 *ORBLC*, 1939, p. 55
- 34 The *Abhijan*, 1938, p. 17

35 ORBLC, 1940, pp. 118-119

36 RAB, 1930-31, p.49

37 C D G, p. 20

38 The *Bhandar*, 1312

39 The *Grihastha*, Chaitra, 1319, p. 281

40 The *Bangla Gazette*, 1929

41 C D G

42 O'Malley, *op.cit.*

43 Hunter, *op. cit.* p. 219

44 C D G, B vol. p. 19

45 ORBLC, 1927

46 *Chittagong College Magazine*, 1927

47 ORBLC, 1942, p. 21

48 ORBLC, 1939, p. 455

49 Bengal District *Gazetteer*, B vol. 1900-1901 to 1910-11, p. 26

50 RAB, 1914-15, p. 125

51 *Ibid.*, 1910-11

52 ORBLC, 1942, p. 22

53 The *Dainik Jyoti*, 1929; *Education Gazette*, 1329

54 *Education Gazette*, 1916

55 *Samsad Bangali Charitabhidhan*

56 ORBLC, 1928, p. 44

57 The *Bangla Gazette*, 1930

58 RAB, 1928-29, p. 113

59 The *Bangla Gazette*, 1929

60 The *Satyabarta*, 1349 (1942)

61 O'Malley, *op. cit.*

62 ORBLC, 1933, p. 205

63 RAB, 1926-27, p. 200

64 ORBLC, 1942, pp. 179-80

65 The *Satyabarta*, 1348, *Eid Number*, p. 43

66 ORBLC, 1931, p. 27

67 *Ibid.*, 1939, p. 400

68 The *Purabi*, 1344

## Chapter 10

### Public Health

Public Health Department of the government deals primarily with the protection of community health, control of epidemic diseases, improvement of sanitary conditions and the provision of health care.

Cholera, typhoid, malaria and small pox were the most common form of epidemic diseases in the district. Polio and pneumonia were the two diseases which afflicted the children. Ezma was common especially among the old and middle aged.

Outbreak of epidemic diseases was frequent during those days of poor sanitary condition and ignorance of health hygiene. According to W W Hunter, "an epidemic of small pox took place in 1850."<sup>1</sup> Malaria caused by the bite of mosquito was widespread both in Chittagong City and in the rural areas. Large number of tanks in the city and marshes in the rural area were the breeding grounds of mosquitos.

Government and the elite society recognized the necessity of fighting the epidemic diseases and preventing the spread of diseases. The establishment of the Bengal Public Health Association in 1922 is a landmark in the history of the public health care.<sup>2</sup> It is a philanthropic organization jointly sponsored by public and private sector. Regarding the composition and object of the Association the government reporter writes,

(The Association) is mainly composed of the public health workers under government, local bodies and other authorities in the province and other members of the public interested in public health. The object of the Association is of comprehensive nature and practically touches all aspects for the development of the public health organization, and perhaps this is the only body of its kind throughout India.

Eminent sanitarians of the province are associated with it and this body co-operates with the public health organisation of the province in a most intimate and useful way. The local government have decided to consult it relating to important public health matters. The government have further allowed their officers to join the Association. The resolutions passed by this Association were found to be useful and at the instance of this Association, the Government have taken suitable steps in different administrative branches of public health.<sup>3</sup>

Malaria and small pox the two serious diseases were brought under control during the early part of the 20th century. The use of quinine to treat malaria became familiar to the people. In 1923-24 small pox vaccination was introduced to check the spread of this disease.

The chief medical officer in charge of the public health of the district is the civil surgeon. The post of civil surgeon was created in early 1870s.

### Hospitals and dispensaries

Medical care programme included both the establishment of new and the improvement of older hospitals. A few hospitals existed during the British rule are mentioned below.

**Medical Hospital.** The Medical Hospital was established in 1897 for the diagnosis and treatment of chronic diseases. The district magistrate Mr. Skrine inaugurated the hospital on the 17th March, 1897.<sup>4</sup>

**Chittagong General Hospital.** The hospital was established in 1901. It is likely that Nimai Charan Charitable Dispensary was converted to Chittagong General Hospital. The government used to pay annually a sum of money as subsidy to the hospital. In 1929 government contribution to the General Hospital was Rs 1,008,78.<sup>5</sup> Rs 20,000 in favour of the hospital was sent by the secretary of the Chittagong School Founding Committee in 1929.<sup>6</sup>

In the early 1930s training centres for junior nurses

started at the General Hospital.<sup>7</sup>

In between 1929 and 1931 a sum of Rs 1500 was granted to the Chittagong General Hospital for the XRay installation.<sup>8</sup>

There was a growing demand for provincialization of the Chittagong General Hospital and Cox's Bazar Hospital. The two hospitals, however, remained unprovincialized till 1945.<sup>9</sup>

**Clive Hospital.** It is difficult to say when and by which organization the hospital was established. Its extension programme was undertaken in 1926-27.<sup>10</sup>

**Police Hospital.** The police hospital was established in 1915. It was, however, not regularly visited by the authorities till 1934.

**Chittagong Railway Hospital.** The Chittagong railway hospital was established in 1925, mainly to give medical treatment to the sick and injured railway employees and their relatives.

Government supervision of the above hospitals was not good enough for the purpose. Government reports admitted that medical school, police hospital, and general hospital were not regularly visited by the authorities.<sup>11</sup>

**Chittagong Veterinary Hospital.** It was established for the treatment of diseases and injuries of domestic animals especially the cattle. Medical officers were appointed to treat the diseased animals. On January 18, 1939 the provincial minister of agriculture and animal department accompanied with the director of veterinary department and Ksirod Chandra Roy M L A and vice-Chairman of the District Board visited the hospital and expressed satisfaction of the management of the hospital.<sup>12</sup>

**Rural Health Care.** Government adopted active measures to control the spread of diseases in the rural areas as early as the 1920s. In 1927, a post of sanitary inspector for each thana was created. His chief functions were to investigate the causes of the outbreak of epidemic diseases, to

conduct medical examinations among the diseased persons and to make suggestions for the improvement of hygienic condition of his locality. He was "in charge of rural health circles which extend over one revenue thana area." His functions, according to government report, were as follows : "The activities of the sanitary Inspectors have been mainly confined to the combating of outbreaks of epidemic diseases, such as cholera and small pox and to the work in connection with the adulteration of articles of food."<sup>13</sup> The appointment of sanitary inspector so much pleased the people of the rural area that they welcomed the government action warmly.

Sanitary inspectors, however, had not been given appointment in evry thana. In 1928 Syed Maqbul Husain complained to the government about the insufficiency of the sanitary inspectors. He says in the legislative council, "In my district of Chittagong there are 22 or 23 thanas and we have upto now been able to provide only seven sanitary inspectors for seven thanas."<sup>14</sup> A number of thanas remained without sanitary inspectors till the end of the British rule.

### Charitable Dispensaries

Humanitarians took the initiative in establishing medical dispensaries for the benefit of the local people. Most of the charitable dispensaries were founded and financed by local wealthy people. A few charitable dispensaries were subsidized by the government.

The first charitable dispensary according to W W Hunter "was established in June, 1840." Referring to the medical treatment in this dispensary Hunter writes, "During the year 1871, 117 indoor patients were treated by whom 93 were relieved or recovered, 11 did not improve or ceased to attend, 12 died and one remained at the end of the year."<sup>15</sup> This dispensary was situated in Anderkilla of the town area.

In course of time a number of charitable dispensaries were established in many villages to provide limited medical treatment for the village folk.

Dispensaries were divided into three classes according to the quality of services they could render. The first two class type of dispensaries were not established anywhere in the rural areas. This was due probably to the non availability of qualified physicians or surgeons. A few village dispensaries where people were given medical treatment are mentioned below.

Up to the year 1911 class III dispensaries were established in Chittagong town, Cox's Bazar town, Phatikchhari, Patiya, Mahajan Hat, Kutubdia, Raozan, Satkania, Banigram, Pomara, Hathazari, Sitakunda, Eidgaon and Paraikora (Sarat Shashi charitable dispensary)

During the period between 1912 and 1930 the following class III dispensaries were established in Abu Torab (Raj Laksmi charitable dispensary), Barama (Jatra Mohan Sen charitable dispensary). Dhorala (Bidhusekhar dispensary, established by Satish Chandra Sen), Fatepur, Colonel Hat (Md. Hakim Nazir charitable dispensary), Mahamuni (Pramathanath dispensary), Datmara, Chakaria.

In reply to an enquiry by Mv. Nur Ahmad, the minister says that the dispensary at Barabakia of Chakaria thana and the Union Board dispensary at Bengura in Patiya thana were not recommended as "eligible to the grant for village dispensaries."<sup>16</sup>

Fateyabad dispensary was established in 1944-45. The dispensary was named after Mr. M M Stuart, the then district magistrate.<sup>17</sup>

The construction works of the following dispensaries were completed in 1934. Ramu Fatewa Dalal charitable dispensary, Mareshkhali Prasanna Kumar charitable dispensary, Teknaaf and Ukhia dispensaries.

The dispensaries of Badarkhali, Jaldi, Kathirhat, Rangunia, Kanchana, Adhunagar (Wilkinson's charitable dispensary) were constructed in between the years 1938 and 1940.<sup>19</sup> Noapara Rajani Ranjan Sen Memorial Hospital was built

by Sarala Bala Sen to commemorate the name of her husband, the renowned poet Rajani Ranjan Sen. She gave a donation of Rs 8000 to the construction fund of this work of charity in 1937.<sup>20</sup>

**Missionary Hospitals.** The European missionary hospitals, established chiefly in the rural areas provided free medical care for the sick. Highly qualified European missionary doctors were employed at the hospitals. Their method of treatment won popularity with the people.

Among the missionary hospitals, Chandraghona hospital and Harbang hospital gained importance of careful medical treatment.

**Chittagong Medical Association.** An organization of medical practitioners, named the Medical Association of Chittagong was established in 1933.<sup>21</sup> Dr Beni Mohan Das Rai Bahadur was its president; Dr Mohammad Omar was its co-chairman and Dr. Harihar Dutta was its secretary. The aims of the association were to protect the interests of the physicians and to make medical facilities easier for the public.

**All Bengal Health Conference.** The fourth session of All Bengal Health Conference was ceremoniously held in the J M Sen Hall on the 26th December, 1937. The conference was inaugurated by Mr. A S Roy, Addl. Magistrate and was presided over by Barrister Anwar ul Azim. Mr Badal Chandra Basu, health officer was the chairman of the reception committee.

In the conference the government was urged to give an appointment of sanitary inspector in each thana of Chittagong. Measures so far adopted to prevent the spread of epidemic diseases among the people were also reviewed and new proposals were adopted in the meeting.<sup>22</sup>

**Health Exhibitions.** Health Exhibitions giving people information about health care were regularly held in different places of the district. The exhibitions played an important role in making the people more conscious about diseases, personal hygiene and how to stay healthy.

The programme of health exhibitions for the first time was included in the Annual Agricultural and Industrial Exhibitions held in 1936.

Exclusive health exhibitions sponsored by the Bengal Health Education Committee started in 1938. Health exhibitions were held successively at Kalipur, Rangamati, Chittagong town, Patiya and Kadhurkhil.<sup>23</sup> From 1938 the health exhibitions became an annual event.

In these exhibitions, improvement of environment of residence, sanitary condition and other important objects were demonstrated with the help of cinematograph, still photograph and illustrative pictures. Rules of keeping good health, food safety, methods of purifying drinking water, animal and plant health and many other items were included among the exhibits.

**Homeopathic, Ayurvedic and Unani Treatments .** Homeopathic medicine based on the chemical balance in the body and using minute quantities of chemicals to restore homeostasis caused by disease was administered by the doctors who was specialized in homeopathic medicine. In the 1930s there were a number of renowned homeopaths in Chittagong. Some of them were Harish Chandra Bhattacharya and his son Sasanka Mohan Bhattacharya, Chandra Kumar Khastagir, Zakir Husain Chowdhury etc.

Ayurvedic system of medical treatment is an ancient Indian system which relies on herbs and discipline of food and personal habits. The person who treats illness using Ayurvedic methods is called a Kabiraj. One of the renowned Ayurvedic dispensaries where Ayurvedic medicines were prepared and patients were treated was Chattagram Ayurvediya Ausadhalaya, established in 1880 at Jatindra Mohan Avenue. The notable Ayurvedic physicians were Kabiraj Girija Shankar Das Vidyānidhi M.A, Kabiraj Kiran Lal Shastri Samkhyatirtha M.A, Kabiraj Jayanta Kumar Das, Kabiraj Jatindra Mohan Rakshit Ayurvedacharya, Kabiraj Shyama Charan Sen Kabiratna.<sup>24</sup>

Hekimi or Unani medicinal system which originated in the Middle East, became popular, particularly with the Muslims.

Each of these systems of medicine is taught in specialized institutions (colleges). Generally, these systems are popular with the lower socio-economic groups.

#### Note :

- 1 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 231
- 2 RAB, 1922-23
- 3 *Bengal Public Health Report*, 1941, p. 22
- 4 *The Panchajanya, Autumn Number*, 1342, p. 102
- 5 *Annual Report on the Working of Hospitals and Dispensaries under the Government of Bengal*, 1929
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 *Triennial Report on the Working of Hospitals and Dispensaries*, 1932-34, p. 21
- 8 *Ibid.*, 1929-31, p. 20
- 9 ORBLC, 1945, p. 277
- 10 RAB, 1926-27, p. 197
- 11 TRWHD, 1932-34, p. 21
- 12 *The Deshapriya*, Jan, 1939, p. 23
- 13 *Bengal Public Health Report*, 1940, p. 101
- 14 ORBLC, 1928, p. 44
- 15 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 233
- 16 ORBLC, 1940, p. 62
- 17 *Ibid.*, 1945, p. 86
- 18 TRWHD, 1932-34, p. 34
- 19 *Ibid.*, 1938-40
- 20 *The Deshapriya*, Falgun 9, 1344, p. 15
- 21 *The Purabi*, 1343
- 22 *The Deshapriya*, Paush 19, 1344, p. 3
- 23 *Annual Report of the Indian Red Cross Society, Bengal Provincial Branch*, 1938, p. 32
- 24 *The Panchajanya, Autumn Number*, 1343

## Chapter 11

### Disaster and Relief

The district of Chittagong is prone to natural calamities such as tornado, cyclone, tidal bore, flood etc. The district has also been victim of man made calamities such as famine, wartime disaster and evacuee influx.

#### A. Natural Disasters

Referring to the natural disaster, differing in places, Walter Hamilton writes that the coastal area is subjected to terrible cyclones and tidal bores, "while those of the interior, being subject to inundation from the mountain torrents which rush down the hills."<sup>1</sup>

The natural disasters that frequently visit the district are as follows :

1. Tornado, cyclone and tidal bore. Kalbaisakhi, the Bengali name for tornado is a regular feature in the warmer months of the year especially during April-May. The strong wind that rises in the afternoon after day long heat is known as kalbaisakhi. It is invariably accompanied with whirlwind, lightning and thunder. The cloud is usually dark because of its great depth. The Kalbaisakhi is generally followed by hailstorm and heavy showers.

Apart from the kalbaisakhi, cyclones of great strength occasionally visit the district in any time of year. It is associated with low depression created on the Bay of Bengal.

A cyclone always creates tidal bores in the coastal area and follows high precipitation in the interior of the district. A very large ocean wave caused by cyclone destroys everything in the coastal area. A short description of some worst type of cyclones that visited Chittagong is given below.

On September 30, 1737 a serious type of cyclone visited the eastern coast of Bengal, causing thousands of death and mass destruction of properties.<sup>2</sup>

On June 3, 1795 a cyclone of great magnitude, according to the collector's report,<sup>3</sup> started at 7 P M and continued to midnight. The roof of the kachari buildings was blown away. Only five brick houses (some of which were badly damaged) escaped from ravages. Heavy downpour washed away many houses throughout the coastal area.

Two years later on November 12, 1797, a furious hurricane passed over the district. While narrating the damages caused by the hurricane the collector reports. "....Two vessels lying in the port were sunk at their anchors. Others were driven on shore, and almost every house belonging to the natives within the circuit of this extensive and populous town having been levelled to the ground. The sunder cutchery has been entirely demolished."<sup>4</sup>

In October, 1872, a cyclone passed over the Cox's Bazar sub division, inflicting heavy casualties of human and animal lives. According to government report, 9 out of every 10 trees in reserve forests fell down.<sup>5</sup>

Four years later, on the 31st October, 1876, a furious cyclone visited Chittagong. It lashed the district from end to end during the whole period of the night. The violent tidal bore that accompanied it washed away the villages in the coastal area. All the rivers even the Meghna were in spate. According to government report, human casualties were 12,000 but according to non official report, the total casualties were one lack seventy five thousand.<sup>6</sup> Cholera epidemic broke out which caused much loss of human lives. Almost all houses in the affected areas raged on the ground. No sign of vegetation did appear in the track next few years.

On October 31, 1886 a violent hurricane and a tidal bore visited the coast of Chittagong and the areas around the mouth of the Meghna. About one lack people lost their lives<sup>7</sup> and

thousands others became homeless. The hurricane left a trail of destruction behind it over the greater part of the district.

The cyclone of October 22, 1897 (Unshat Maghir Tufan) was one of the most disastrous on records. Coastal areas, especially the coastal islands such as Kutubdia and Maheshkhali were heavily affected by its violence. According to government report, 14,000 people lost their lives and 18,000 people died as a result of the epidemic that followed the cyclone. The unofficial account gives heavier loss of human lives. The cyclone followed a severe famine throughout the district owing to the full-scale destruction of foodgrains.<sup>8</sup>

In November, 1904 a heavy storm visited the district. In April, 1922, a devastating cyclone<sup>9</sup> caused great destruction over a wide area specially in the Cox's Bazar subdivision. In May, 1923, a terrible cyclone visited Cox's Bazar.<sup>10</sup> In 1927 Cox's Bazar sub division was ravaged by a terrible cyclone.<sup>11</sup>

In the beginning of the 20th century barometer system of measuring atmospheric pressure was brought into use for forecasting weather above sea level. Flagstaffs were erected in different places of the coastal area. "A flagstaff was erected near Cox's Bazar for hoisting storm warning signals for the benefit of the fishermen at Sonadia island."<sup>12</sup>

It is only in the beginning of the 20th century that the cyclone struck areas began to be officially declared as disaster affected areas and were qualified to receive certain types of governmental aid and relief supplies on emergency basis. But these were quite inadequate to meet the affected people's needs.

**2. Flood.** The principal cause of flood is the result of the inflow of river water. Innumerable streamlets (locally called chhara) descending from the hills suddenly raised by heavy downpour of rain in the hilly areas. The violent flow destroys the food crops planted on both the banks of the stream. The silting up of the river bed blocks the passages of running water and causes overflowing of the river banks and inundation in nearby villages.

Smaller rivers like the Ichamati, Shilok, Dolu, Matamuhuri etc. wrought disasters of great dimension when they rechart their courses during heavy monsoon.

Continuous rainfall during the monsoon months causes all the rivers in spate. It gives rise to the river flood which causes extensive damage of crops and transport system. A few instances of worst floods are cited below.

In September - October, 1927, a terrible flood occurred in the Raozan Thana. While narrating the suffering of the people Syed Maqbul Husain says in the provincial legislative council, "....The flood continued for about 15 or 16 days as a result of which all the crops were damaged, and the people are now starving as the price of rice has increased very considerably. Government immediately sanctioned Rs 40,000 relief." The aid according to the Hon'ble member was "quite inadequate."<sup>13</sup>

A heavy flood in 1937 devastated almost all parts of the district. Government sanctioned a sum of Rs 6,500 for distribution of agricultural loans in the affected areas of the district and Rs 750 for gratuitous relief in Cox's Bazar sub division.<sup>14</sup> Maulvi Nur Ahmad narrated the sufferings of the people of the flood affected areas and expressed dissatisfaction at the insufficiency of government relief.

In August 1939 a serious flood caused widespread devastation in the Cox's Bazar sub division.

In 1940 Mr. Nur Ahmad brought the sufferings of the people of northern Chittagong, "owing to annual inundation", to the notice of the government. The chief minister while visiting the affected areas assured the people of excavating silted up streams.<sup>15</sup>

The terrible flood of 1946 inundated a large area of central Chittagong and caused heavy damage of property and lives. A flood committee was formed with Mrs. Nellie Sengupta in the chair.

3. Flood tide. Coastal areas of the district are subjected

to flood tide especially during the full moon and the new moon periods. During the British period a number of embankments were built up in order to keep out the sea water from flooding the agricultural land. Some of these embankments were the Kutubdia embankments, the Gandamara dykes, the Saral embankments, the Bakkhali embankments, the Gahira embankments, the embankments on the Buramchhara. Violent tidal bores seriously damage these embankments which have to be rebuilt after each calamity.

4. Blight. Plant disease caused by parasites and caterpillars damages the paddy crops especially in aman season. Every year blight visits some parts or other of the district, which became disastrous to the afflicted areas. The condition is more acute where aman is the only crop of the year.

5. Earthquake. The district of Chittagong is located in the volcanic belt. A mild to moderate form of earth tremor may occur in any time of the year.

Among the powerful earthquakes on record the earthquake of 1762 was the most disastrous. Serious cracks on the surface of the earth did occur everywhere in the district. The reporter gives a detailed description of the extensive damage to life and property.<sup>16</sup>

Earthquake of moderate type often shakes the district. An earth tremor occurred in the winter of 1865. On the 12th June, 1897 an earthquake shook the district.<sup>17</sup>

## B. Man made disasters

1. Famine. Every natural calamity followed famine. The occurrence of cyclone, tidal bore, flood, blight, draught etc. left a trail of famine behind each of them. Extreme scarcity of food caused death from starvation. No food or any kind of relief was given to the distressed people to relieve their misery. If the food, shelter and medicine were given to the distressed people in time then the suffering of the victims would be much reduced.

Though relief operation was one of the important functions of the District Board, till the year 1911 no relief assistance was sent to the afflicted areas by the District Board.<sup>18</sup>

To alleviate the distress of famine stricken people, the Famine Code was enacted in 1913. This measure taken by the government made efforts in a very limited scale to relieve famine in affected areas. Famine Relief and Insurance was framed on the recommendation of the governor.<sup>19</sup>

One of the most disastrous famines on government record was the famine of 1942-43. The major causes of this famine were low agricultural production as a result of war panic, sudden increase of population due to the influx of evacuees from Burma, stoppage of the import of food stuffs from Burma, Assam and Barisal, and wartime inflation.

Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi while explaining the causes of the famine in Chittagong says in the legislative council as follows

এই জেলায় যাহা উৎপন্ন হয় স্বাভাবিক অবস্থাতেও তদ্বারা দেশবাসীর ছয় মাসের খোরাক হয় না। অবশিষ্ট ছয় মাসের খোরাক বাহির হইতে অর্থাৎ ব্রহ্মদেশ হইতে আমদানী করা হইত। চট্টগ্রাম জেলার পাঁচ লক্ষাধিক লোক ব্রহ্মদেশে ও জাহাজ ইত্যাদিতে কাজ করিয়া প্রচুর অর্থ উপর্যুক্ত করিয়া থাকিত। তদ্বারা আমদানী ধান চাউলের ব্যয় নির্বাহিত হইত। কিন্তু গত বৎসর হইতে যুদ্ধের প্রভাব চট্টগ্রাম পর্যন্ত বিস্তৃত হইয়া পড়িয়াছে। ব্রহ্মদেশ হইতে কমপক্ষে দুই লক্ষ লোক আসিয়া জনসংখ্যা বৃদ্ধি করিয়াছে। ব্রহ্মদেশের ধান চাউলের আমদানী একেবারে বন্ধ। জেলার বহু স্থান হইতে সামরিক উদ্দেশ্যে বহু গ্রাম জনশূণ্য করিয়া দেওয়া হইয়াছে। এই বৎসর অজন্মা হেতু ধানের উৎপন্নিও মোটের উপর অর্ধেক হইয়াছে। ইহার উপর মিলিটারীদের উপদ্রব ও তাহাদের জন্য শস্যক্রয় স্থতন্ত্র বিপদ।...”<sup>20</sup>

**Mr Shahed Ali speaks in the House,**

.... It (Chittagong District) had its food stuff imported from Burma, it had then its food stuff imported from Assam and it had also imported rice from Bakarganj. But unfortunately, sir, we are not now getting any rice from Burma and it has been prohibited by an order of the Government of Assam that no rice should be imported from there to the province of Bengal....<sup>21</sup>

**Mrs. Nellie Sengupta vividly describes the threat of wide**

spread famine in Chittagong in the assembly on July 13, 1943

....As you know, we used to have a lot of rice, great deal of rice from Burma. In fact, many Chittagonians used to live almost entirely on Rangoon rice. That rice has not been forthcoming now for many months.

Another thing is that last year's crop was a very disappointing one, much less than we had hoped for. Another reason is that two lacks of evacuees had come from Burma. They came to the Chittagong district last year. They came with practically nothing, without money and certainly without food; and they had to be given food.

Then there is the military.... But you can not go on feeding the military at the expense of the civil population for all time and that is what is happening in Chittagong.

Then again, there are so many families in Chittagong with almost no earning members. Many of the menfolk are political prisoners. Many of them are detenus and last year several hundreds of people were killed. It means again there are so many families with no earning member.

Then again there are the fishermen of Chittagong and they are in the terrible crisis. As you know, boats have been removed and consequently no boat can go into the Bay of Bengal which means that the livelihood of fishermen has gone.

Then again, I would draw your attention to the roving beggars. They used to be fed by people but now every grain of food counts and they cannot get anything. No one can give any grain of food to these beggars. People are boiling the leaves of mango trees and eating them and they are also eating red potatoes which are undoubtedly very substantial but not good for stomach....<sup>22</sup>

The price of rice jumped as high as Rs 30 to 32 per maund according to government sources<sup>23</sup> But the sufferers like the present author witnessed the price of rice rose as high as 50 to 60 Rupees per maund in his locality.

The number of beggars rose in a higher degree, Men,

women and children combed fields and forests, marshes and hills to find a scrap of edible material. Mr Dhirendra Lal Barua gives a touching narrative of the sufferings of the people in the legislative council on July 15, 1943.<sup>24</sup> Deaths from starvation became a common scene both in the urban and in the rural areas. Maulvi Nur Ahmad told the legislative council. "that many deaths due to starvation have occurred in Chittagong town and rural areas and the number is daily on the increase."<sup>25</sup>

In spite of much delay the government started rescue operation. It provided cooked food for hunger stricken people. Free kitchens were established in almost every ward in the town and in every village in the rural areas. Free kitchening continued upto 1944.

On September 15, 1943, H S Suhrawardi informed the legislative council that 62,000 maunds of rice, 30,000 maunds of bazra and 32,000 maunds of dal (pulse) have been ordered to be despatched from Calcutta.<sup>26</sup>

Medical treatment to the distressed people was undertaken on emergency basis. According to government sources, "599 persons were treated in the hospitals and rescue homes in Chittagong."<sup>27</sup>

Non official food committees were formed in every village. Volunteers for relief works were recruited from all sections of the people.

Rationing system was introduced in 1944 for "non-agricultural poor people... It has started in Patiya and Boalkhali from February, 1944."<sup>28</sup> In Chittagong town the rationing system has been fully introduced" and according to the report of the municipality chairman, "it is working there very satisfactorily."<sup>29</sup>

In 1944 government opened controlled shops in the rural areas. Rice, wheat, bazra, clothing, fuel and other provisions were supplied to the people at cheap rate and in limited quantity.

Among the non-official organizations that conducted relief works among the distressed people 'Friends Ambulance Unit' was most noteworthy and won high praise from the public. It was formed in 1943 as a relief organization. While praising their benevolent works Khan Bahadur Fazlul Qader Chowdhury states in the provincial assembly :

...I express deep gratitude to the 'Friends Ambulance Unit for opening several free canteens particularly in the district of Chittagong and feeding 100 orphans and destitute children in each centre supplying them with milk and vitamin pills and clothing. This great philanthropic work was taken up by the Friends Ambulance Unit when all other organizations ceased to function. They have earned everlasting gratitude of the public.<sup>30</sup>

In 1944 a number of 'food for work' schemes were undertaken by the government for the relief of the poor. One important scheme was the reexcavation of canals. According to government report, about thirty schemes of reexcavation of canals were undertaken.<sup>31</sup>

The effect of the famine of '43 was disastrous for the common people. Many poor peasants were compelled to sell their paternal lands at a nominal price. This gave rise to the landless labourers. The growing dissatisfaction of the peasants lead to agricultural unrest which gained physical shape in the Tebhaga movement.

**2. Wartime disaster.** The Second World War broke out in 1939. In 1942 Chittagong became a theatre of war. Regular bombing by the Japanese airships resulted in the extensive loss of lives and properties of civil population. The Japanese bombing in the Chittagong town made the people panicky and led to the influx of the town people to the rural areas. Law and order greatly deteriorated owing chiefly to the garrisoning of the forces of the Allied Powers. Chittagong town was officially declared unfit for living with family. All the educational institutions were closed down to provide accommodation for the

military troops. the Collegiate School was converted to the fire brigade headquarters. Primary schools in the town were turned to the residences of the soldiers. Business life in the town came to a stand still.

It is true that the wartime preparations provided opportunities for recruitment, but it was at the risk of being killed or injured. During air attacks people were desperately seeking shelter from bombing.

The war period witnessed an abnormal increase of prices of commodities. The declining supply of goods in the market was a major cause of the rise of price level. The price level of every available commodity was so high that the people of low income group could not purchase even the bare necessities of life.

To prevent the spread of war time panic and to protect the civilian population against enemy attack certain measures were taken by the government. Some of these were as follows :  
(a) During the war period a special civilian body was set up called Air Raid Precaution (precisely ARP) to rescue people from air attack. (b) All India Radio, Calcutta centre broadcast news and bulletins at short intervals to allay panic and to boost morale. (c) Frequent press notes and communiques were issued. (d) Pamphlets were circulated advising the people to take precautionary measures in order to save lives from bomb attacks. (e) Trenches and bunkers were dug in the roadside and open spaces adjacent to buildings.

The country wide civil defence programme kept the people safe from too many deaths.

3. Burmese evacuee influx. The outbreak of the Second World War and the subsequent Japanese occupation of Burma put the life and property of the Indian migrants in great danger. A large number of natives of Chittagong were employed in professional jobs in Burma. The pressing danger forced the Bengalee residents to flee their houses and to take shelter in Chittagong.

The basic responsibility to take care of the evacuees rests with the authorities of the country of asylum. Unfortunately no government measures to relieve the agony of the evacuees were taken. The government practically did nothing regarding the repatriation of the evacuees from Burma.

On September 15, 1943 Maulvi Nur Ahmad asked the Home Department to inform the council about the relief given to the evacuees of Burma. He requested the government to start relief assistance to the victims without further delay.<sup>32</sup> The Home Minister Sir Khwaja Nazimuddin replied, "The government of India have accepted the responsibility for rendering financial and other assistance to the evacuees from the Eastern War Zones."<sup>33</sup> It is, however, not known what kind of assistance was ever given to the evacuees.

Chittagong was passing through a very hard time when the man made disasters like famine, war crisis, evacuee influex concurrently acted destructively upon the social life. Mr. Dhirendra Lal Barua in the provincial legislature vividly narrates the extreme sufferings of the people as follows :

One like me cannot but feel wonder that public attention has hardly been drawn to the silent but terrible distress of the people of Chittagong.... arising partly from large influx of evacuees from Burma and further India, financially ruined and literally penniless, partly from the dislocation of trade and traffic due to the war situation and repeated enemy action and mainly from the scarcity of essential food stuffs and the outbreak of malaria, dysentery and cholera in an epidemic form.... From a personal and intimate knowledge of the terrible plight which confronts them I can inform this House that unless both the government and the public co-operate in sending abundant quantities of food stuffs, medicines, diet, 50,000 of starving and half starving people will die at the onset of the next winter, not to speak of those who have already died during the past three months, whose number one need not be astonished, may exceed half a lack....<sup>34</sup>

**Note :**

- 1    *Hamilton's Hindustan*
- 2    *Gentleman's Magazine, vol VIII*
- 3    *Memorandum*, p. 229
- 4    *Ibid.*
- 5    Hunter, *op. cit.*, p.184
- 6    The *Panchajanya, Autumn Number*, 1342, p. 101
- 7    The *Nava Jiban*, 1291
- 8    See the poet's autobiography
- 9    *RAB*, 1922-23, p. 3
- 10   *Ibid.*, 1923-24, p. 43
- 11   *Ibid.*, 1926-27, p. 68
- 12   *Ibid.*, 1916-17, p. 77
- 13   *ORBLC*, 1928, p. 44
- 14   *Ibid.*, 1937, p. 744
- 15   *Ibid.*, 1940; pp. 36-37
- 16   *JASB*, 1762
- 17   The *Panchajanya, Autumn Number 1342*, p. 102
- 18   *District Gazetteer, 1901-11*, p. 20
- 19   *ORBLC*, 1927, p. 531
- 20   *Ibid.*, 23.2, 1943, p. 245
- 21   *Ibid.*, 1943, p. 22
- 22   *ORBLC*, July 13, 1943, p. 340
- 23   *Ibid.*, 1944, p. 1344
- 24   *Ibid.*, 1943, pp. 133-34
- 25   *Ibid.*, 1944, p. 22
- 26   *Ibid.*, 1943, p. 71
- 27   *Ibid.*, 1944, p. 968
- 28   *Ibid.*, p. 1344
- 29   *Ibid.*, p. 1047-48
- 30   *Ibid.*, 1945, p. 83
- 31   *Ibid.*, 1944, p 735
- 32   *Ibid.*, 1943, p. 25
- 33   *Ibid.*, p. 2
- 34   *Ibid.*, p. 144

## Chapter 12

### Social Welfare

Social welfare in modern times means governmental and private charitable services rendered to those who are illiterate, socially backward, people living in extreme poverty, physically and mentally handicapped, victims of natural and man made disasters, children and women of poorer class.

The charitable works in the district were started by the European missionaries in the beginning of the nineteenth century. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, western concept of humanitarianism and liberalism greatly, influenced the enlightened class many of whom became zealously active in the promotion of human welfare.

Maternity care and child welfare. The condition of child population was in no case good. Male children in the rural areas were employed in the fields and pastures. Girl child was exposed to all sorts of discrimination, abuse and exploitation. Girl children suffered early marriage and motherhood. Obviously, teen aged mothers were not capable to look after their children. Cases of maltreatment to step children by step mother were common. Children of divorced wives were subjected to miserable condition.

The mounting problem of neglected children required legislation to deal with the problem. In order to furthering the child welfare following laws were enacted. (a) In 1890 Guardians and Wards Act was passed. (b) The enactment of the Bengal Children Act, 1922 was a major step for the welfare of children. By this Act parents or other family members are required to assume the responsibility for the care of their wards. (c) The Declaration of the Right of Children, 1924, states firmly that children are endowed with human rights. (d) The Child

Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 declares the child marriage an illegal act. (e) Employment of Children Act, 1938, clearly states that the employment of minor boys and girls in industrial establishments is prohibited.

All these laws have merits no doubt but their application was very much limited.

The high rate of infant mortality and child birth mortality was a great concern to the socially conscious people. It created a movement for the establishment of child welfare and maternity hospital in the town. The government responded favourably to the public demand and agreed to establish a maternity centre in the town. While replying to an enquiry made by Maulvi Nur Ahmad about the progress of the construction of the proposed maternity centre the minister replies as follows :

The scheme for establishing a maternity and child welfare centre was forwarded by the commission of the Chittagong Division to the Director of Public Health in the beginning of January 1941 and is now being examined by him. It is reported that a sum of Rs 7, 902 has been realised out of the promised amount of Rs 10,000. The plan and estimates of the Maternity and Child Welfare Centre have been sent to the Director of Public Health.<sup>1</sup>

Referring to the construction of the Maternity Centre, Maulvi Nur Ahmad informs the House that "the work of the Maternity and Child Welfare Centre has already commenced with the annual contribution of Rs 1000 and more from the Chittagong municipality and services of a very efficient European Health Visitor has been obtained."<sup>2</sup> The hospital was named Jemison Maternity and Child Welfare Centre to commemorate Mr. T G Jemison the then magistrate collector who was closely connected with the construction of the building.

**Deaf and Dumb School.** The children that were insensible to hearing and unable to speak evoked the feeling of sorrow and sympathy of the public. In the early 1930s Chittagong

municipality leased out a piece of land for erecting a house for the Deaf and Dumb School. In reply to an enquiry by Rai Bahadur Kamini Kumar Das with regard to the construction of the proposed building W D R Prentice replied that unless Chittagong people co-operate with government in uprooting terrorist activities no step could be taken.<sup>3</sup> This meant that the establishment of a humanitarian institution depended on the fulfilment of a political demand, which was beyond the capacity of people in general.

**Orphanages.** A few orphanages concerning with the well-being of children particularly children suffering from the effects of poverty or lacking normal parental care were established by individual enterprise. Two more important orphanages are mentioned below.

1. **Chittagong Islam Mission Etimkhana.** In reply to an inquiry in the legislative council Khwaja Nazimuddin said that the Chittagong Etimkhana came into being in 1931.<sup>4</sup> The founder of the Etimkhana was Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi, a great philanthropist of his times. He acted as its secretary till his death. The Etimkhana was supported by charitable contributions.

2. **Deshabandhu Anath Ashram.** It was founded in 1928 at Chandanpura. Satish Chandra Nag was its chief organizer and principal. The Dhar family of Dabua donated a building along with some landed properties valued 50,000 rupees to this institution. In 1936 Tripura Charan Chowdhury and Nalini Kanta Das were its president and secretary respectively.<sup>5</sup>

**Women Welfare.** In the middle of the nineteenth century humanitarians started thinking of women welfare. The social workers paid their attention to the removal of all kinds of discriminations and restrictions imposed on the female society. A few organizations for the promotion of women welfare are cited below.

1. **Helping Hand Society.** It was founded in 1936 through efforts of Mrs. H G Wait. During the whole time of her staying in Chittagong she exerted herself for the well-being of the womenfolk of Chittagong.

The District Judge Mr H E Wait was the principal patron of the society. He assigned a portion of his residence to be used by the society. Mrs H G Wait was its first president and Mrs S L Khastagir was the first general secretary. Mr Ahmedur Rahman Seth a well known social worker was one of the members of the working committee.

In October, 1937, the society organized an exhibition of handicrafts made by the members of the society. It was held at the residence of Mrs Wait. The Handicrafts consisted of embroidery, wrapper, mat, cushion, table cloth etc. The designs and quality of the exhibits were praised by all sections of the visitors.<sup>6</sup>

In cooperation with Satsangha Nari Shilpashram the Helping Hand Society made efforts to provide career of employment for the girls and widows.

The Helping Hand Society also launched a programme of assisting patients in the hospitals.

2. **Satsangha Nari Shilpashram.** It was founded in the middle of the 1930s. The principal and secretary in 1936 were Swarnalata Devi and Indu blushan Dasgupta respectively.

The organization provided free assistance for the helpless women especially the widows to live a self supported life.

In the ashram various types of garments were designed and embroidered. These were put on display in different exhibitions.

3. **Women's Protection League.** In many cases when a husband died in his early age his family was left completely destitute. Humanitarians pleaded for the protection and safety of women who needed it much. With this view in mind the humanitarians established Women's Protection League. In

1936, the president and the secretary were Barrister S L Khastagir and Umesh Chandra Gupta respectively.

**4. Widow Remarriage Association.** The enlightened section of the society strongly pleaded for the remarriage of young widows. With this view they formed an organization named Widow Remarriage Association. In 1936 Jatindra Lal Dutta was the secretary of the association.

**Chattagram Mahila Samiti.** The Samiti was founded in 1931. The president and the secretary were Mrs N N Roy chowdhury and Mrs Mohsin Ali respectively. In 1936 Mrs P B Rudra and Mrs Hubert Seyne were the president and the secretary respectively.

Members of the Mahila Samiti assembled regularly at the Public Library Hall on every Sunday afternoon. The programme included the cultivation of music, needle and embroidery works, reading of articles before the gathering, newspaper reading, exchange of views etc. Sunday was declared as women's day in the Public Library.<sup>7</sup>

**Youth Welfare.** Youth welfare included a series of cultural, social, recreational, vocational and counselling programmes. Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Young Men Christian Association, Byayam Samiti were some of the important organizations exclusively devoted to the youth welfare.

**Assistance to the Political Sufferers.** During the Chittagong Revolt hundreds of patriots who were either active revolutionaries or suspects were taken prisoner. In the later part of the 1930s many of these prisoners were released from jail custody. After their release they found themselves in a wretched condition. Most of them belonged to the families of low income group. There was no opportunity of employment, no source of income from any quarters. To help the unfortunate detenus an organization called Rajbandi Sahajya Samiti (association for the rehabilitation of detenus and political sufferers) was established on December 19, 1937. In

the inaugural meeting held at the J M Sen Hall an appeal was made to the public to help rehabilitation of the political sufferers.

On January 8, 1938, a mammoth meeting attended by such prominent persons as the municipality chairman Nur Ahmad, district Congress president Mahim Chandra Das, Golam Sobhan, Tripura Charan Chowdhury, Ambika Charan Das was held at the J M Sen Hall. The meeting urged the government to take immediate steps regarding the rehabilitation of the released detenus.

Meetings of Rajbandi Sahajya Samiti were held in almost every village. In the meetings earnest plea was made to the public to help the political sufferers to overcome their hardship.

**Labour Welfare.** Labour welfare aims at betterment of the conditions of life of workers and their families. No labour welfare programmes either by the government or by the employers were undertaken for the improvement of the conditions of work and the livelihood of the labourers.

Trade Union for protection of labourer interests was formed in a very loose form in 1938. On July 23, 1938, Suresh Banarji, president of All India Trade Union Congress presided over a large meeting of labourers and common people held at the J M Sen Hall. In the meeting he urged the government to take necessary steps for the social well being of the labourer class.

**Indian Red Cross Society.** Bengal provincial branch. Red Cross Society was the leading humanitarian organization which offered various types of humanitarian sevices to the sufferers of natural disasters.

The Bengal branch of Indian Red Cross Society rendered substantial help to the medical institutions by supplying bedding comfort etc. and in addition paying the salaries of nurses.

From 1929 to 1938, the General Hospital received a grant of Rs 2,400 annually from the Red Cross Society.<sup>8</sup> In 1932 Red

Cross society granted Rs 500 for treating illness at Sitakunda Mela.<sup>9</sup> In 1938 Cox's Bazar Hospital received a grant of money from the Red Cross Society.<sup>10</sup>

The activities of the Junior Red Cross Society were extended to Chittagong. The activities were primarily confined among the groups of school students. The object of the Junior Red Cross movement was "to improve the health of the members of the groups, to teach them simple hygiene and to encourage them to aim at better sanitary conditions in their schools and in their homes."<sup>11</sup> The following institutions were affiliated to the junior branch of the Red Cross Society in 1937. (a) Government Madrasa, (b) Government Middle English School, (c) Chittagong Collegiate School, (d) Municipal High English School, (e) Government Muslim High School.<sup>12</sup>

**The Chittagong Association.** Among all the humanitarian organizations, the Chittagong Association was the first and foremost in position. It was established at Calcutta in 1874 by Dr. Annada Charan Khastagir, the great social reformer and his associates under the name of Chittagong People's Association. According to W W Hunter, "...the Association is composed of educated natives of Chittagong living in Calcutta."<sup>13</sup> The first president of the Association was Kamala Kanta Sen.

In the next year the Association was transferred from Calcutta to Chittagong. It was inaugurated by the Lt. Governor of Bengal while he was visiting Chittagong in January, 1875.

The objects of the Association, according to Hunter, were "to promote the good of the district", "to bring to the notice of Government or of the local authorities any reform that may be considered desirable", and "to promote female education."<sup>14</sup> It also recommended to the government time befitting measures to improve the social condition of the people.

The membership of the Association was open to all progressive minded and socially conscious people irrespective of caste or creed. In fact, almost all progressive people joined

this association.

Throughout the period of its existence from 1875 to 1950 the Association was connected with all kinds of social and humanitarian works.

Within a very short time of its establishment about five or six girls schools were established in the urban and rural areas.<sup>15</sup> From that time down to the first quarter of the twentieth century a number of educational institutions were built under the patronage of the Chittagong Association.

The Chittagong Association provided humanitarian aid for the famine and flood stricken people and the people affected by the world wars. The Association urged the government to treat the imprisoned revolutionaries fairly and not in a cruel way.

In 1925 the Association celebrated its golden jubilee.

Islam Association (variously called Moslem Association, Mohhammadan Association) Chittagong Branch. The Association was established in 1908 (?). The purpose of the organization was the development of religion, society, education and the country by establishing unity and fraternity among the Muslims. Almost all the Muslim elite were either members of the Association or connected with the charitable activities of the Association. The members made efforts to deal with social problems according to the current socio-political beliefs.

**Chattogram Musalman Chhatra Samiti.** The Samiti was the district branch of province wide organization. It was established in 1924 for the purpose of welfare activities. The organization was also connected with political movements.

**Chattogram Zilla Juba Samiti.** On October 29, 1929 a large gathering, presided over by the divisional commissioner Mr. Abdul Momen was held at the Muslim Hall. A proposal to establish a youth organization to be named as Chattagram Zilla Jubo Samiti was adopted unanimously in the meeting.<sup>16</sup>

Mohammad Ekramul Haq and Dr. M A Hashem were president and secretary respectively of the Juba Samiti.

The Jubo Samiti rendered valuable service to the All Muslim Conference held at the Parade Ground on April 18, 1930.<sup>17</sup>

The Nizampur Central Moslem Youngmen's Association established in 1929 was the most influential youth organization in northern Chittagong. The chief patrons of the Association were S. Nader Ali, Mv. Farrokh Ahmad Nezampuri and others.

On December 24, 1938 an organization named the United Muslim Youth Association was established at the instance of eminent persons. It seems that Chattagram Musalman Chhatra Samiti and Chattagram Zilla Jubo Samiti joined together to form one large organization. Its aim was to render social service among the backward section of the society.<sup>18</sup>

**Tarun Bouddha Samiti.** The Buddhist youths formed this organization, the purpose of which was the welfare of the younger generation of the Buddhist society. Jyotiratna Barua was its nominated president. Mahima Ranjan Barua was one of the prominent members of the samiti.

**European Association** - The object of the Association was to look after the social well-being of the European residents of the town. In 1931 Mr Nolan was the president of the Association. He held this post till 1937. Mr A C West was its secretary. In the meetings of the Association members exchanged their views on diverse subjects especially business and current politics.

**Residential Welfare Institutions.** There are some educational institutions requiring the students to live in the same building. The students are given religious instruction and training in social work. These institutions are controlled by the ascetics and run by charity and public subscription. Among many residential institutions following three are noteworthy.

**Jagatpur Ashram.** The Ashram was established by Purnananda Paramahamsa Dev in 1903. During the Swadeshi movement period it was a residential institution of the community of the patriot sannyasis. Jogesh Brahmachari, a revolutionary received institutional training in this Ashram. In the 1920s it became a reputed centre of Sanskrit learning. In the 1930s it afforded shelter to the orphans and helpless women.

**Pravartak Ashram.** It was established by the great revolutionary Matilal Roy in 1921. Originally it was a welfare institution devoted primarily to educational and vocational training. Resident students were required to perform religious duties and welfare works among the residents.

**Ramkrishna Sevashram.** It was established in the later part of the 1920s primarily as residential educational institution. The boarder students were given training in philanthropic and charitable works. In the latter part of 1930s Rasik Chandra Hazari and Devendra Lal Das were its president and secretary respectively. On May 8, 1938 the annual meeting was ceremoniously held. It was presided over by Barrister S L Khastagir.

### Co-operative Society and Co-operative Credit Society.

The co-operative movement involves doing social welfare work together in order to improve the condition of the common people and to develop the rural areas.

The co-operative movement increased its activity in the late 1920s. In almost every advanced village, co-operative society was established and ran by the local enterprising persons.

In 1920 the municipal sweepers established a cooperative society, "which has rescued them from the moneylenders grip."<sup>19</sup>

In 1927 the co-operative society of Kodhurkhil village was established. It helped establishment of High School, weaving society, charitable dispensary, library etc. The

programme of financial assistance to the poor students was also adopted by the co-operative society. The co-operative society of Kodhurkhil provided a model for other co-operative societies of rural areas.

The co-operative society related to the agriculturists was known as Samabaya Krishi Samiti. By the Government of India Act, 1919, the co-operative department was provincialized and brought under government supervision. The district cooperative society known as Chattagram Zilla Samabaya Krishi Samiti was established in 1926. "Maulvi Abdul Jabbar, inspector, Co-operative society, Chittagong was placed in charge of the Chattagram Zilla Samabaya Krishi Samiti Ltd. in February 1930."<sup>20</sup> Owing to the mismanagement, many of the co-operative societies were wound up. The government report states, "Three societies out of five under the said Samiti have gone into liquidation."<sup>21</sup>

Co-operative credit is that branch of welfare economics that concerns with the welfare of the people especially the poorer section. The Co-operative Act, passed in 1904 provided for the starting of rural as well as urban credit societies. As a result a number of co-operative banks were established in the rural areas to provide capital for needy villagers on easy terms and allow the borrower to pay by instalments.

**Rural Welfare.** After the government had relaxed the severity of laws controlling the formation of committees in 1936, rural welfare committees under the various names of Palli Unnayan Samiti, Gram Samiti, Gram Unnayan Samiti were established almost in every village. The aim of these committees was to provide assistance for people that needed it. The members of these committees were enthusiastic about the development of their respective villages.

**Movement against Social Barrier.** Gandhiji started campaign against caste segregation throughout India in 1920s. He named the scheduled caste as Harijan.

A meeting to discuss the improvement of the Harijan class was held on September 15, 1938. Swami Jnanananda a socialist leader, revolutionary Jatin Raksit and many other prominent persons attended the meeting. Swami Jnanananda spoke on the curse of untouchability. A proposal to remove social barriers on the Harijans was adopted. The meeting voted to accept the formation of an organization named Chattagram Harijan Samgha.

**Note :**

- 1 ORBLC, 1941
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 130
- 3 *Ibid.*, 1933, p. 79
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 337
- 5 The *Dainik Jyoti*, 1929; The *Satyabarta*, 1344
- 6 The *Deshapriya*, 20 *Agrahayan*, 1344, p. 12
- 7 *Ibid.*, 9 August, 1938
- 8 *Annual Report on the Working of Hospitals and Dispensaries under the Government of Bengal*, 1929-38
- 9 *Ibid.*, 1932
- 10 *Ibid.*, 1938, p. 17
- 11 *Annual Report of the Indian Red Cross Society, Bengal Provincial Branch*, 1937, p. 34
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 34-39
- 13 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 211
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 The *Bangla Gazette*, 1929
- 17 *Ibid.*, 1930
- 18 The *Abhijan*, 1938, p. 15
- 19 RAB, 1919-20, p. 45
- 20 ORBLC, 1935, p. 339
- 21 *Ibid.*

## Chapter 13

# Literature and Literary Organizations

The term literature applies to a variety of literary compositions such as poems, novels, plays, literary criticisms, itineraries etc. In all these branches of literature, Chittagong makes commendable contributions. Much of the compositions either in prose or in verse written during the British period have lasting quality and artistic merit.

The latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century witness a revolutionary change in politics, religion and society. This change has characterized the contemporary literary composition.

Contact with the English learning brought a change in Bengali style of writing. The English poets and writers greatly influenced the Bengali poets and prose writers in the same degree.

Establishment of printing press provided an opportunity of printing and publication for a writer's compositions.

It is not possible to give a detailed description of literary works in a short space. Only a brief study on the literary activities during the British period is permitted here.

Chittagong has a glorious tradition of the cultivation of classical literature such as Sanskrit, Pali and Persian. Cultivation of Sanskrit literature goes as far back as the ancient period. A number of distinguished Sanskrit scholars during the British period wrote many Sanskrit works among whom the following writers are noteworthy. Rajani Kanta Chakravorty Sahityacharya wrote 'Chattal Bilapam' in praise of literary personages of Chittagong. Jagat Chandra Bhattacharya Vidyavinod wrote a biographical work named 'Srivatsya Charitam' which

has some historical value. Dr. Jatindra Bimal Chowdhury a foreign educated Sanskrit scholar showed considerable talent in writing philosophical and religious books in Sanskrit. He also wrote a number of books and articles on the literary qualities of ancient Sanskrit works. He wrote dramas in Sanskrit for the stage performance.

Pali is the sacred language of the Buddhists. It eventually became a dignified international language of the Buddhists.

Chittagong has a reputation of vigorous activities in Persian literature since medieval period.<sup>1</sup> Cultivation of Persian literature received fresh impetus during the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth century. Some of the Persian poets along with their works may be mentioned here. Ajiullah, 'Gham i Aam' (poem in elegiac metre); Maulana Akbar Ali, 'Minhajul Mumni'; Abdul Awwal, 'Aattahkatual Khatira', 'Al Jawame ul Qadriya'; Majharul Haq Majhar, 'Inshah e Majhar'; Shah Jahangir, 'Masnavi Ganj e Raj', Abul Mohsin Foujul Kabir Shah, 'Fujujat e Gausia', 'Al Faujul Azim fi Maulud un Nabi Karim, Abul Fateh Ahsanullah, 'Ahsanul Insha'.

Some Characteristic traits that marked the Bengali literary works during the British period can be described as follows :

Love of mother country characterizes many of the poems. The patriotic writings are aimed at arousing love of one's country. The 'Palashir Juddha' of Nabin Chandra Sen, the 'Sikh' of Bipin Bihari Nandi are the two specimens of patriotic poems.

Expressions of political views and opinions characterize many of the prose writings. Generally, the political writings were published either in the newspapers or in the periodicals.

Revolutionary ideology, narration of revolutionary events, martyrdom of the patriots characterized the revolutionary writings of the period. Writings on the Bolshevik Revolution, Irish Revolution and other revolutionary events were included in this class of writings.

Expression of romanticism and the beauty of nature characterized most of the poetical works. The poets are lovers of nature and make an effort to transfuse the love of nature to the readers.

The latter half of the nineteenth century is the great age of religious revival. Religious beliefs and ethical principles have been expressed in the writings of the poets and prose writers.

### **Poets and poetry**

Some of the poets of remarkable ability during the British period may be mentioned here.

Nabin Chandra Sen (1846-1909). His works demonstrate variety of themes, spontaneity in composition and variation in rhyming.

Nabin Chandra Das, Kabigunakar (1853-1914) was a poet of great ability, a proficient translator and a successful editor of a literary periodical.

Bipin Bihari Nandi (1870-1937) poetized the historical, semihistorical and legendary events.

Sasanka Mohan Sen (1873-1928). His works are marked by imagination and lyricism. Many poems manifest devotion to divine being and appreciation of natural objects.

Jibendra Kumar Dutta (1883-1921), a prolific poet, wrote about a dozen books of poems and about 300 poems. He was also an accomplished essayist and a biographer.

Hemanta Bala Dutta (1889-1916). Subject matter of her poems is mostly divine thinking. Composition is graceful and pleasing. Her poetries are consecrated to the services of the divine being.

Besides these gifted poets, there were other poets whose compositions have the qualities of poetry. Some of them are Abu Ma 'Ali Mohammad Hamid Ali ('Jainaloddhar Kavya', 'Sohrab Badh Kavya'), Muhammad Ibrahim, Abdus Salam ('Anchar'), Rahimunnesa Khanam ('Bhratribilap')

Poetical works of the poets of Chittagong may be classified as follows :

(a) Lyric poems. The chief characteristic of the lyric poems is the expression of intense personal emotion usually in short poems divided into stanzas. A few specimens of lyric poems may be cited. 'Abakash Ranjini' of Nabin Chandra Sen, 'Shoka Giti' (Elegiac poems) of Nabin Chandra Das, 'Sindhu Sangit', 'Saila Sangit' of Sasanka Mohan Sen, 'Arghya' of Bipin Bihari Nandi.

The lyric poems of Jibendra Kumar Dutta present grace and subtleness. Besides his important lyric works 'Anjali', 'Dhyanalok', 'Tapobon', 'Matrisok' etc., he wrote a number of lyric poems which were published in different periodicals. 'Maa' and 'Mandire' are two reputed books of lyric poems of Mohini Ranjan Sen.

(b) Epic poems. Epic is "a long narrative poem conceived on a grand scale telling a story of great or heroic deeds. .... The style of the epic is marked by a diction rich in circumlocutions, epithets etc."<sup>2</sup> Warfare and the courts of kings supply its materials.

Though there was no epic in etymological sense, some of the works written on a grand scale are typical of an epic. The most famous poetical composition having the features of an epic is the 'Sapta Kanda Rajasthan', written by Bipin Bihari Naudi. It is a narrative poem recounting heroic deeds of Rajput princes. 'Palashir Juddha' of Nabin Chandra Sen has characteristics of an epic. Raibatak', 'Kurukssetra' and 'Pravas' of Nabin Chandra Sen jointly form an epic, the subject matter of which books is the divine activities of Lord Krishna.

(c) Long Poems. Long Poem is narration in details about the actions of remarkable men and women, land scape, remarkable incident etc. Some of the long poems are mentioned below.

'Cleopatra', 'Rangamati', 'Amitabha' of Nabin Chandra Sen.

All of these poems are written in Bengali.

'The story of Ekasringa', 'Rukmavati', 'The story of Jyotishka', 'The story of Srugupta', 'The story of Adin Punya' of Nabin Chandra Das. All of these poems are written in English.

**Novels.** "The novel is an imaginative prose narrative of some length usually concerned with human experience."<sup>3</sup> The first half of the twentieth century was the most productive period of novel writing. Some of the celebrated novelists along with their works are mentioned below.

Girish Chandra Barua Vidyabinod ('Andher Jasthi') Mahbub Alam ('Masijan'), Abdur Rashid Siddiqu ('Zarina') Syed Waliullah ('Lal Salu', 'Chander Amabasya'), Abul Fazal ('Chouchir'), Ohidul Alam ('Karnafulir Majhi')

**Satirical writings.** This branch of literature is "a composition holding up vice or folly to ridicule or lampooning individuals."<sup>4</sup> Sometime a satire is written to expose the views and follies of society. Ahsabuddin Ahmad in his book 'Bande Votaram' (in English) uses humour to show the faults of the politicians. His other work is 'Ser Ek Anna Matra'. 'Gof Sandesh' of Mahbub Alam is a successful satirical writing.

**Translatory works.** In translating original poetical works into another language poets of Chittagong show excellence.

In translating Sanskrit classical works into English and Bengali verse Kabi Gunakar Nabin Chandra Das surpassed all others. He translated poet Magha's 'Shishupal Badha', poet Kalidasa's 'Raghuvamsa', poet Bharabi's 'Kiratarjuniyam', poet Ksemendra's 'Charucharyasataka' into Bengali verse. All these translatory works show the poet's great skill and accomplishment.

Jibendra Kumar Dutta translated some of the poems of Hafij into Bengali verse.

Buddhist scriptural text 'Dhammapada' was translated partly or wholly by a number of Buddhist litterateurs. Birendra Lal Mutsuddi's translation was highly appreciated by readers.

Prajnalok Mahasthavir translated 'Milinda Panho' in two volumes. The book was also translated by Rev. Dharmadhara Mahasthavir. Dr. Benimadhab Barua translated 'Madhyama Nikaya'. Ramchandra Barua translated 'Mahasatipathana Sutra' into Bengali. Pali text 'Diggha Nikaya' was translated into Bengali by Dhammadvansa Mahasthavir.

**Biographical writings.** Biography has been defined as the history of the lives of the individuals. Biographical composition in the form of puthi dates back to the medieval period. Those biographical puthis were in most cases based on fictitious tales and romances.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century there has been a change in the style of writing biography. Some of the biographers along with their works are cited below.

Forrokh Ahmad Nezampuri, 'Khaled bin Walid' 'Hazrat Abu Hanifa', 'Hazrat Belal', 'Rabeya Basri'

Mohammad Abdul Monaem, 'Sultana Razia'

Sarbananda Barua, 'Amitabha'

Nur Ahmad, 'Forty great men and women of Islam.'

Comrade Muzaffar Ahmad, 'Qazi Nazrul Islam Smriti Katha.'

**Autobiographical writings.** Autobiography is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "the writing of one's own history, the story of one's life written by himself."

The most famous autobiographical work in the Bengali literature is the 'Amar Jiban' of poet Nabin Chandra Sen. It is a vivid account of the life and times of the poet. It also gives many valuable information about the contemporary men of letters of Bengal.

In the middle of the 20th century some reputed writers wrote the story of his own life. These works contain many of the writers' own experiences. Some autobiographical works are cited below.

Jibendra Kumar Dutta, 'Smritir Surabhi'; Mahbub Alam, 'Paltan Jibaner Smriti'; Abul Fazal, 'Rekhachitra'; Maniruzzaman Islamabadi, 'Atmakatha'; Abdur Rahman, 'Jatatuks Mane Pare'.

**Philosophical and Religious writings.** The object of these kinds of writings was to tell the people about the philosophy, especially the moral philosophy. The names of the writers and their works are noted below.

Saman Punnananda Sami, 'Ratnamala'; Sridhar Chandra Barua, 'Abhi Sambuddha'; Khemesh Chandra Raksit, 'Uttar Gitacchaya', 'Pandava Gita'; Ven. Bangshadip Mahasthavir, 'Kacchayana', 'Bhiksu Pratimoksa', 'Buddha Bandana', 'Nabaraj' Barua, 'Buddha Parichaya'; Beni madhav Barua, 'A History of Buddhist Philosophy', 'The Ajivikas', 'A History of Pre-Buddhist Philosophy'; Roma Chowdhury, 'Nimbarka Darshan', 'Vedanta Darshan', 'Sufism and Vednta'; Aggasar Mahasthavir, 'Buddha Bhajana', 'Gatha Samgraha', 'Simhali Pujavali', 'Dhammapad Atthakatha'; Syed Ainuddin', 'Tafsir'; Abdur Rahman, 'Koran O Jiban Darshan'; Maulana Nurul Haq, 'Marefat'.

**Essays, historical works and literary criticisms.** There are a number of works written by men of letters which contain articles about his own belief, historical events, literary criticism and other related subjects. A few examples are cited below.

The greatest writer of literary criticism and one of the outstanding representatives of Bengal Renaissance was H M Percival. He earned reputation as a 'Shakespearean scholar'. He edited with learned skill almost all the works of Shakespeare.

Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi was a reputed scholar and a prolific writer. Some of his important books are 'Bharate Islam Prachar', 'Musalmancer Abhyutthan', 'Samaj Sanskar', 'Bhugol Shastre Musalman', 'Khagol Shastre Musalman', 'Qurane Swadhinatar Bani', 'Bangla Sahitye Musalman' (presidential address in the Basirhat conference)

Abdur Rashid Siddiqi, 'Chattagram Rosain Tattva'. The book is an ethnological study of Chittagong Muslims and Arakanese Muslims.

Jibendra Kumar Dutta wrote a praiseworthy criticism on Nabin Chandra Sen's Shailaja in which he shows originality of thinking and variety of presentation.

Maulvi Nur Ahmad wrote a number of books on the glorious past of Islam. Some of these are 'Rising Islam', 'A Short History of two hundred Muslim Historians', 'Glories of Islam.'

Dr. Beni Madhab Barua wrote a number of scholarly books and articles. Some of these are 'Inscriptions of Asoka', 'Ceylon Lectures', 'Sahasra Barsher Bouddha Sahitya'.

'Arakan Rajsabhaya Bangla Sahitya' is a monumental work jointly written by Dr. Enamul Haq and Abdul karim Sahitya Visharad.

Dr. Jatindra Bimal Chowdhury was well versed in Sanskrit and wrote a number of scholarly books. Some of these are 'Contributions of Muslims to Sanskrit Literature', 'Baisnabder Sanskrita Sahitye Dan'.

The early part of the twentieth century witnesses a vigorous study of local history. A number of able writers composed a good number of local history of good quality. Some of these are 'Tarikh i Chatgam' by Hamidullah Khan, 'Chattagramer Itihas' by Tarak Chandra Dasgupta, 'Hathazarir Itibritta' by Syed Ahmad Chowdhury, 'Chattagramer Itihas' by Purna Chandra Chowdhury.

The great historian of subcontinental fame Professor Kalika Ranjan Qanungo showed great skill in writing historical works about heroic figures and memorable events.

Revolutionary writings. Chittagong was closely connected with revolutionary movements against British rule. The Chittagong uprising in the early 1930s is a memorable event in the history of the freedom movement. A number of books were written by the revolutionaries themselves. The following

works deserve special mention for the information of this great event. 'Agnigarbha Chattagram' by Ananta Singh, 'Rajdrohir Jabanbandi', 'Biplabi Bir Pramod Ranjan' by Charu bikash Dutta, 'Chittagong Armoury Raiders : Reminiscence' by Kalpana Dutta. Revolutionary writings were in most cases subject to government proscription.

**Itineraries.** Itineraries mean a record or account of a journey.

The most celebrated writer of travel books was Rai Sarat Chanra Das Bahadur. His most important work is 'Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet.' The book is written in the form of a diary in which the author writes down his everyday experiences. While expressing warm approbation of the travel book the London Times writes that, "...the subject may be fairly said to be the most important book on Tibet."<sup>5</sup> His another work entitled 'Narrative of a Journey to Tashi Lhumpo' with an introduction written by Sir Alfred Croft, vice-chancellor of the Calcutta University was published in the 'Journal of Buddhist Text Society.' These books supply interesting and valuable accounts of the topography and natural scenery of the mountainous region of the Himalayas.

Dr Francis Buchanan Hamilton (1762-1820) made an extensive tour during which time he visited several different places of the district of Chittagong. He wrote an account of his journey in diary form. The book entitled 'South East Bengal' not merely narrates the route of his journey but gives valuable ethnological description of the tribesmen and social condition of the Bengalees of Chittagong.

Other books of travel such as 'Bilat Deshti Matir' (in Bengali) of Jyotirmoyee Roy Chowdhury and 'Safar nama' (in Persian) of Maulana Abdul Hakim deserve praise.

**Literary works in English.** Some poets of Chittagong had a good command of the art of writing poetry in English language. A few of the poets may be mentioned here.

Ramkinu Dutta (1801-1894) an influential native of Chittagong was the first poet of the district who could write English poem fluently. He was called by his British friends 'Byron of Bengal'. 'Manipur Tragedy' is his noteworthy published work.

Poet Nabin Chandra Das wrote English poems in lucid style. His two works 'Miracles of Buddha' and 'The Antiquity of the Ramayana' have been highly acclaimed by the literati of both India and Europe.

Another gifted poet was Rajani Ranjan Sen, whose three poetical works bear deep poetic qualities. These are 'Triumph of Valmiki', 'Glimpses of Bengal Life', 'The Cosmic Dust.'

Collection and editing of manuscript puthis and folk poems. Antiquarians began to explore the folk lores towards the end of the nineteenth century. Folk lores and puthis have many common features. Both these items are based on traditions and stories related to either an individual or a community.

The first scholar who showed great interest in finding out folk lores of Chittagong was J D Anderson the magistrate collector of Chittagong (1894-97). He had a good command of Bengali language and Chittagong dialect. He with the help of Raj Chandra Dutta collected a number of Chittagong proverbs and folk poems.

Poet Jibendra Kumar Dutta collected a considerable number of poems and songs of past period.

Ashutosh Chowdhury made a significant contribution to the restoration of puthi literature. He collected a large number of medieval poems, ballads and folklore.

By far the greatest explorer of medieval puthis was Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad who found out hundreds of puthis of old time from different parts of Chittagong. He studied every puthi and wrote comments on this sometime in detail.

### Literary Associations

A Bengali literary association is a body of persons

organized for studying, appreciating and writing literary works. A number of literary associations grew up during the British period. The history of these associations, however, is not happy. Many of these organizations were financially handicapped and without adequate number of office bearers. Membership was not considerable and income from subscription was so low that even necessary expenditure could not be adequately met with.

**Adhyayan Sammilani.** The Adhyayan Sammilani was probably the first literary organization in Chittagong. It was established by an enthusiastic educated group of youths under the leadership of Nalini Kanta Sen, an illustrious son of a distinguished father Kamala Kanta Sen. Nalini Kanta's younger brother Jamini Kanta actively participated in this enterprise. The first meeting of the Sammilani was held in June, 1896. The proceedings of 1898 session was briefly published in the 'Anjali' (October, 1898). The untimely death of Nalini Kanta brought the activities of the Sammilani to an end.

**Chattagram Sahitya Parishad.** The most renowned literary organization in Bengal was Bangiya Sahitya Parishat established in Calcutta in 1894. Poet Nabin Chandra Sen and Rai Sarat Chandra Das Bahadur of Chittagong were its founding members. Many of the literati and the intellectuals of Chittagong were enlisted as its members.

The Bangiya Sahitya Parishat in one of its sessions adopted a resolution that branches of the Parishat should be established at every important district sadar. The aim of the branch Parishat would be the enhancement of the cultivation of Bengali literature, restoration of old manuscripts and collection of folk lores.

Justice Sarada Charan Mitra, a renowned scholar and a literary man while visiting Chittagong in 1318 BE (1911) proposed in a meeting of the local elite that a branch of the Sahitya Parishat should be established at Chittagong and named Kabi Gunakar Nabin Chandra Das as its president designate.

According to its proceedings, the Chattagram Sahitya Parishad was established on Shravan 30, 1318 B. E (August 15, 1911). The first working committee of the Parishad was constituted as follows : president : Nabin Chandra Das, Kabi Gunakar, M A, B L; vice-president : Nabin Chandra Dutta, Rai Bahadur; civil surgeon (Rtd); secretary : Bipin Chandra Guha; joint secretary : Jibendra Kumar Dutta, poet; members - 8.

Membership of the Parishad was open to all. Within a very short time more than a hundred persons were enlisted as members of the Parishad who were entitled to take part in the activities of the Parishad.

The first general meeting of the Parishad was held on January 1, 1912. It was proposed that the parishad should meet once a month.

In the monthly meeting held in Agrahayan, 1319 a resolution was adopted by the Parishad to publish a quarterly literary periodical, which was to be named 'Prabhat'. The 'Prabhat' was first published in January 1913. Only selective articles and poems read in the parishad meetings were published in the 'Prabhat.'

Unfortunately, the proceedings of either the monthly meetings or annual literary conferences are not available to us. Newspapers and literary personages in past years complained that no steps were taken to preserve the proceedings of the meetings and conferences.

The first annual literary conference under the auspices of the Chattagram Sahitya Parishad was held in 1324 (1917) at Fateabad. The conference was presided over by Rajeswar Gupta.

A literary conference was held at Satkania in the same year. It was presided over by poet Shasanka Mohan Sen. Sarada Charan Khastagir was nominated chairman of the reception committee.

The next annual conference (sammelan) of the Chattagram Sahitya Parishad was held in 1325 (1918) at

Noapara near the crematorium of poet Nabin Chandra Sen. The conference was presided over by poet Bipin Bihari Nandi.

The next annual conference of the Chattagram Sahitya Parishad was held in the village Saroatali in 1326 BE (1919). The conference was jointly sponsored by the intellectuals of Saroatali, Dhorala and Kanungopara. The conference was presided over by Sarada Charan Khastagir.

The conference held in 1332 B E (1925) was attended by a large number of literary persons. In this conference 21 articles were read and discussed. A new working committee of the Parishad was formed. Professor Surendra Nath Dasgupta and Sukhendu Bikash Roy were nominated president and general secretary respectively.

The annual Sahitya Parishad conference was held on Friday, 11th Falgun, 1340 B E (1933). It was attended by eminent litterateurs and journalists. The conference was presided over by Ramananda Chattopadhyaya, the founder editor of the 'Prabasi'. Dr. Mohammad Enamul Haq was nominated president of the reception committee.

In the annual meeting of the Sahitya Parishad held in 1935 the working committee of the next year was formed. Nagendra Nath Roy Chowdhury and Sushil Chowdhury were nominated president and general secretary respectively.

The annual conference of the Chattagram Sahitya Parishad was held on the sixth October, 1937 (1344 BE) at the J M Sen Hall. In absence of Nagendra Nath Roy Chowdhury, the president of the Parishad, Sailendra Bhushan Dutta, the vice president presided over the meeting which was attended by distinguished members of the Parishad. In the business session of the conference the working committee for the next year (1938)<sup>7</sup> was constituted as follows : chairman : Nagendra Nath Roy Chowdhury; co-chairman : Sailendra Bhushan Dutta and Abdul Monaem; general secretary : Hirendra Lal Chowdhury; joint secretary : Sachindra Nath Dutta; treasurer : Nalini Kanta Das.

The annual conference of the Chattagram Sahitya Parishad held in the village Kadburkhil on April 15, 1938 (1345 BE) had great importance to the audience. The presence of the famous litterateur Annada Shankar Roy, the district magistrate added grace to the conference. The conference was presided over by Professor Janardan Chakravorty. The chairman of the reception committee was Anukul Chandra Das. The inaugural speech was delivered by Maulvi Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad. Professor Janardan Chakravorty, Dr. Jatindra Bimal Chowdhury Professor Jogesh Chandra Sinha, Ashutosh Chowdhury, Maulvi Maqbul Alam, Birendra Lal Das delivered valuable speeches in the conference. The literary session, presided over by the district magistrate Annada Shankar Roy, was held in an open space under the shade of a banyan tree.<sup>8</sup> His valuable speech was published in the news media.<sup>9</sup>

The next annual Sahitya Parishad meeting was held on Friday, January 6, 1939 at the J M Sen Hall. The president of the Sahitya Parishad presided over the meeting.

In 1940-41 Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad was nominated president of the Sahitya Parishad. He held this post till 1950.

The monthly meetings of the Sahitya Parishad were held regularly. In each meeting learned papers were read and poems were recited. People of literary interests attended the meetings and discussed their views. The meetings were usually presided over by the chairman of the Parishad.

Besides the annual and monthly meetings, the Sahitya Parishad in co-operation with the local elite groups organized special literary sessions, observed condolence meetings on the death of illustrious persons and arranged cultural functions to provide entertainment for the audience.

On Friday, October 21, 1937 Rabindra Sammelan was held in the J M Sen Hall. The meeting was presided over by the S D O.

On Friday, December 3, 1937 in the monthly meeting of

the Parishad held at the J M Sen Hall homage was paid to the great scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose.

In January, 1938 a condolence meeting on the death of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya was held in the J M Sen Hall. The meeting was jointly organized by the Sahitya Parishad and the Sahitya Majlis.

On February 3, 1939 the death anniversary of poet Nabin Chandra Sen was held at the J M Sen Hall under the auspices of the Sahitya Parishad. The Arya Sangeet Samiti conducted the musical soire and Mrs Ashalata Mukherjee presented vocal music. Presided over by Mahim Chandra Das, the meeting was attended by a large number of literary persons. Professor Jogesh Chandra Sinha delivered a valuable speech on the literary composition of the great poet.

In 1940 the Rabindra Jayanti in honour of the great poet was celebrated at Patiya. The SDO Sailendra Mitra made necessary arrangements for the celebration. Acharya Ksiti Mohan Sen, the renowned Rabindra scholar was invited to preside over the conference.

The Chattogram Sahitya Parishad Library was a pride possession of the Parishad. The library had no building of its own. It was housed at the Public Library building. The library was enriched by the donation of books by the local elite. In 1925 the total number of volumes in the library was 637.<sup>10</sup>

**Chattogram Musalman Sahitya Parishad.** It was established in the early part of the 1940s. The purpose of this organization was to promote the literary pursuits of the Muslim writers. The Muslim landlords and merchants generously helped the Parishad.

According to the news report, the annual literary conferences under the auspices of the Parishad were usually held on large scale. Literary persons of the other parts of the province were invited to participate in the conference. In 1945, a two days long literary conference was ceremoniously held at the

Muslim Hall. The monthly and weekly literary meetings were regularly held. Writing of poems, recitation etc. were offered for competition among the youths and the successful competitors were rewarded.<sup>11</sup>

**Sahitya Majlis.** An enlightened group of Muslims headed by Professor Abul Fazal established this literary society in 1934.

Members of the Majlis met together regularly to discuss the work of literature especially poems and articles. The Majlis organized annual conferences at which local literary persons participated. In 1935 Dr. M. A. Hashem was joint secretary of the annual conference.

In 1936-37 the working committee<sup>12</sup> of the Majlis was constituted as follows : president : Sirajul Islam (munsif), general secretary : Abul Fazal, joint secretary : Abdus Salam.

The Majlis encouraged literary cultivation and played an important role in developing literary awareness among the Muslims. The Majlis won praise from the literary circles.

**Chittagong Culture and Fellowship Society.** This was an organization formed by a group of elite having a common interest in literature. Dr. Sailendra Bhushan Dutta took the responsibility of the management of the society's affairs. He was the president and Mr. S N Dutta was the secretary of the society's working committee.

On November 5, 1938, a literary meeting under the auspices of the society was held at the residence of Sailendra Bhushan Dutta. Members of the local literary organizations joined the meeting which was presided over by Janaki Nath Das. Ven. Dharmavansa Mahasthavir recited from scriptural text in the beginning of the meeting.

The chief attraction of the meeting was the presence of famous litterateur Annada Shankar Roy, the then district magistrate of Chittagong. He gave a thoughtful speech on 'Bangla Sahityer Bhasha.' The attending literary persons enjoyed the qualities of the speech.

**Pragati Lekhak Samgha.** This literary association of progressive minded young writers was established in 1938.

The inaugural session of the Lekhak Samigha was held on June 1, 1938 at the Municipal High School campus. Ashutosh Chowdhury presided over the meeting. General secretary Sudhansu Shekhar Sarkar read a note on the purpose of the Lekhak Samgha. Ohidul Alam and Kalpataru Sengupta read articles in the meeting. Surendra Mohan Shastri, Birendra Kumar Rakshit, Ananta Lal Barua, Farrokh Ahmad Nezampuri were some of the distinguished persons who participated in the discussion. Shortly afterwards, the Association published a monograph named 'Pragati'.<sup>13</sup>

On August 30, 1938 the Lekhak Samgha observed the birth anniversary of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya at the J M Sen Hall. Professor Jogesh Chandra Sinha presided over the meeting. 'Bankim Chandra O Samyabad' was the leading article read in the meeting.<sup>14</sup>

**Assam Bengal Railway Institute Literary Association.** It was established in 1940 to provide an opportunity for the cultivation of literary faculty of its members. Literary meetings were held annually. Persons of literary distinctions were invited to deliver lectures and to participate in the discussion.<sup>15</sup>

### Provincial Literary Conferences

Two provincial literary conferences on a large scale attended by many renowned literary personages were held in Chittagong.

(A) **Bangiya Sahitya Sammilan, Sixth Conference, 1318.** The sixth conference of the Bangiya Sahitya Sammilan, sponsored by the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat was held in Chittagong on the 22nd and 23rd March, 1911 (1318 BE). Many prominent members of the Parishat, local elite and persons of literary distinction joined this conference. The conference was presided over by Aksoy Chandra Sarkar. The chairman of the

reception committee was Jatra Mohan Sengupta.

A considerable number of articles on various subjects especially literary were read and discussed. For the first time the session was divided into arts and science sections. The morning session of the second day was assigned to the science section. Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy presided over the science seminar.

About three poems written by poetesses of Chittagong were presented at the conference. These, however, were read by the male delegates.

In the afternoon session of the second day a number of learned papers on the history and literature of Chittagong were read by the reputed local writers.

Four proposals with regard to the academic study of dialect and ethnology of Chittagong were submitted before the conference for consideration. All of them were accepted.<sup>16</sup>

(B) Bangiya Musalman Sahitya Sammilan, Third Conference, 1325. The third conference of the Musalman Sahitya Sammilan was held in Chittagong on the 29th and the 30th December, 1918 (1325). This was for the first time that the provincial conference of Musalman Sahitya Samiti was held outside Calcutta. The venue of this conference was the open space near Anderkilla. The number of the delegates from other districts was 83. An audience of 3,000 watched the procedure of the conference.

The conference was presided over by Maulana Akram Khan. Maulvi Abdul Karim was elected president of the reception committee. A number of illuminating articles were read and discussed in the conference.

Two important resolutions were adopted in this conference. The first was writing a history of Bengal during the Muslim period based on Persian sources. The second was the formation of 'Chattagram Pratnatattva Udghatan Samiti.'

The conference expressed thanks to Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi, Maulvi Abdus Sattar, Chowdhury Siddiq Ahmad and Chowdhury Nazir Ahmad for their endeavours to make the conference successful. The conference was terminated by vote of thanks read by maulvi Nur Ahmad M A, B L.<sup>17</sup>

Purabi Literary Conference, 1938. The conference was jointly organized by the Purabi magazine and the Pragati Lekhak Samgha. Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad was nominated chairman of the reception committee. Qazi Abdul Wadud presided over the conference. Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad and Jagat Chandra Bhattacharya were honoured by ceremonious reception.

The seminar part of the conference was held under three separate sessions. In each of the sessions valuable articles were read and discussed. The history seminar was presided over by Dr. Muhammad Enamul Haq.

The conference was a grand success. The audience cheered the deliberations of the speakers by frequently clapping their hands. The conference was remembered by the audience for many years.<sup>18</sup>

The literary conferences either on large scale or on limited scale encouraged the writers to pursue their literary activities. Poets and critics zealously participated in these conferences. Their writings undoubtedly enriched the Bengali literature.

In these conferences articles and poems were read and opinions were expressed on them. There was much scope for interchange of views and opinions about literary subjects. These conferences undoubtedly encouraged the Bengali literary activities in the district.

#### **Note :**

1 The *Bangladesh Asiatic Society Patrika*. 1983 p. 127

- 2 *Webster's Dictionary*
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Oxford Dictionary*
- 5 *Qt. Journal of Buddhist Text Society, Vol. I, Pt. II, 1894, App. iii*
- 6 *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, 1894, Proceedings*
- 7 *The Deshapriya, 11 October, 1937, p. 13*
- 8 *The Purabi, 1345*
- 9 *The Deshapriya, No. 5, 1938*
- 10 *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, Proceedings, 1332*
- 11 *Saptahik Kohinoor, 1952, p. 179*
- 12 *The Satyabarta, 1344*
- 13 *The Deshapriya, June, 1938*
- 14 *The Purabi, 1345*
- 15 *The Anjali, 1940*
- 16 *Sixth Conference of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, a booklet published by the Parishat*
- 17 *The Bangiya Musalman Sahitya Patrika, Magh. 1325; the Saogat, Magh, 1325*
- 18 *The Purabi, 1938*

## Chapter 14

### Journalism

Newspapers and periodicals were the only newsmedia when no other media existed during the British period. Newspapers of various sizes contained news, articles, advertisements etc. and published everyday or every week. Periodicals were published in interval of week, fortnight, month and year. Periodicals were concerned chiefly with literary and academic subjects. Most of the newspapers and periodicals were spokesman papers of particular political parties, associations and commercial concerns.

Periodicals published during the British period may be classified into three categories according to their subject matter; (a) news based, (b) literary, and (c) religion based. News based periodicals contained political information. Literary periodicals contained the collection of literary compositions such as poems and essays. Religion based periodicals contained compositions connected with the rituals and philosophy of a specific religion.

The spread of literacy created reading public. Establishment of a number of printing press was helpful for the publication of periodicals. In some cases, the owner of a printing press also edited and published a periodical.

During the early part of the 20th century a large number of newspapers and periodicals were published in Chittagong. In respect of the publication of newspapers and news magazines Chittagong was placed next to Calcutta. There is, however, no dependable information regarding the number of published newspapers and periodicals. According to one source the total number of different kinds of periodicals published in Chittagong upto 1905 were as follows : weekly-4, fortnightly-2, and

monthly-6. The following is the list of newspapers and periodicals that were either published in Chittagong or edited by the people of Chittagong at other places during the British period.

(The) 'Abhijan' : weekly. Edited and published jointly by Umesh Chandra Chowdhury and Ashutosh Ghose and printed at the Kohinoor Electric Press. It was first published on December 27, 1938.

(The) 'Adhikar' : a left-leaning monthly. It was edited by Nanigopal Sengupta and was published in Lyall Road, Chittagong. The aim of the publication of this news magazine was to spread communist ideology. The 7th September, 1939 issue was proscribed by the government.

(The) 'Advance' : daily newspaper based on current political affairs. It was edited by Deshapriya Jatindra Mohan Sengupta and was published in Calcutta. It appeared in 1929. The paper aimed at reflecting the political views of the Congress Party, party politics and the activities of the politicians.

(The) 'Alo' : monthly literary magazine. It was edited by Nalini Kanta Sen and published by Amar Nath Dutta in the Eden Hindu Hostel, Calcutta. The magazine was first published in Bhadra, 1306 (August, 1899). The writers for the magazine were mostly students and youths. The Swadeshi spirit was expressed in the compositions contained in the periodical.

(The) 'Anjali' : monthly educational magazine. It was edited by Rajeswar Gupta and was first published in Baisakh, 1305 (April, 1898) from Anjali Karyalaya, Chittagong. Its aim, according to the periodical was "to give moral training to boys and girls."<sup>1</sup> Printed for circulation-108 copies, price-2 annas, pages 106. Rabindra Nath Tagore praises the periodical very highly. High opinion was expressed by the contemporary elite about the quality of the periodical.

(The) 'Anjali' : quarterly literary magazine. It was the spokesman paper of the Assam Bengal Railway Indian

Institute. It was first published in 1339 (1932). It maintained high standards all through its existence.

(The) 'Annesa' : monthly periodical. First published in April, 1921. Edited by Mosammatt Safia Khatun. it was the first ever periodical published by a woman.

(The) 'Bangla Gazette' : news based weekly. It was edited successively by Maulana Farrokh Ahmad Nezampuri (1929-31) and Khorshed Alam Chowdhury (1932-42). The periodical was published in Strand Road, Rangoon. The chief patron was Maulvi Abdul Bari Chowdhury the well known merchant of Rangoon. Presentation of news, news commentaries and the printing and binding won high praise of the readers.

(The) 'Bharatbasi' : weekly. Edited by Prasanna Kumar Kar. First published in 1882.

(The) 'Bibhakar' : quarterly. This literary periodical was jointly edited by Nabin Chandra Das and his elder brother Sarat Chandra Das while they were students of the Presidency College, Calcutta. It was first published in 1872-73.

(The) 'Bouddha Bandhu' : monthly. The periodical was first published in Baisakh, 1291 (April, 1884). From the beginning its publication was never regular. After an interval of three years it appeared again in 1887, edited by Krishna Chandra Chowdhury. But shortly afterwards it again ceased to exist. In 1268 Maghi Era (1313 B.S. 1906 A. D.) it reappeared. In this issue it was announced that the aim of the journal was the "religious, educational and social development." This issue was published by the Bouddha Samiti. After some time it stopped publication. It reappeared in 1322 (1916) being edited by Saman Punnananda Sami from 46/7 Harrison Road, Calcutta.

(The) 'Bouddha Patrika' : monthly. The periodical was first published in 1312 BS. (1905) as a spokesman paper of the Bouddha Vihara of Chittagong. The first five issues were edited and published by Bipin Chandra Barua. The sixth and seventh issues were edited by poet Sarbananda Barua, the joint editor

was Bipin Chandra Barua. Lalit Kumar Barua and Upendra Lal Barua were secretary and joint secretary respectively.

(The) 'Chandrakekhar' : a religion based monthly. It was first published in 1878.<sup>2</sup>

(The) 'Chattal Gazette' : weekly. The periodical was edited by Aksay Kumar Gupta. According to Brajendra Nath Bandyopadhyaya, it was first published in 1888 A.D. The 'Dhaka Prakash' while praising its good qualities mentioned the date of its publication as 1887.<sup>3</sup> According to the government report, it was first published in 1887.<sup>4</sup> It was a renowned newsperiodical containing useful facts about current events and academic affairs.

(The) 'Chattala' : This literary periodical was published by the Postal and RMS Employees Union. It was first published in 1937. The quality of the periodical has owned praise of the public.<sup>5</sup>

(The) 'Cox's Bazar Hitaishi' : edited by Abdur Rashid Siddiqi, it was first published in 1946.

(The) 'Deshapriya' : weekly newspaper. This popular newspaper was first published in 1937. Hirendra Lal Chowdhury was its editor and Subrata Das was joint editor. The 'Deshapriya' belonged to the 'Panchajanya' newspaper group. An important characteristic of this newspaper was the presentation of news of rural areas in greater amount. It also contained articles on political views and news of politcical and cultural meetings held both in rural and urban areas.

(The) 'East Echo' : English fortnightly. Edited by Kalipada Bhattacharya. First published in 1938 under the sponsorship of the East Press Alliance.

(The) 'Gairika' : half yearly periodical. It was first published in 1936. The name of the journal was given by Rabindra Nath Tagore. The journal was edited by Prabhat Kusum Dewan and was published under the auspices of Rani Binita Roy of Chakma royal family.

(The) 'Ganabani' : edited by comrade Muzaffar Ahmad and first published in 1926.

(The) 'Hitabarta' : weekly newspaper. It was first published in 1310 B E. Its new series appeared in the 1930s and was edited by Birendra Lal Dasgupta.

(The) 'Islamabad' : weekly. It was edited by Farrokh Ahmad Nezampuri. After his going away to Rangoon Khorshed Alam Chowdhury became its editor.

(The) 'Jagajyoti' : It was the spokesman paper of the Bengal Buddhist Association, Calcutta. It was edited by Ven. Gunalankar Mahasthavir. It played a very important role in the revitalization of the Buddhist society.

(The) 'Janamat' : weekly nationalist paper. Edited by Abdul Monayem. It was first published in 1343 BE.

(The) 'Jugadharma' : weekly news magazine. Edited by Jyotish Chandra Kar. It gained popularity so long it continued to exist.

(The) 'Juger Alo' : Edited by poet Didarul Alam it was published in Fare Street, Rangoon. It was liberal and progressive in ideology.

(The) 'Juger Jyoti' : It started its publication in 1934. Editor was Syedur Rahman.

(The) 'Jyoti' : a news based paper. Its founder editor was Kalishankar Chakravorty. From 1911 to 1929 it was published as weekly magazine. Later on, it was published as a daily by Mahim Chandra Das. The paper was always very critical of government policy. In 1929 the Jyoti was proscribed by government ordinance.

(The) 'Kohinoor' : monthly. It was the spokesman paper of Jamaat e Ahle Sunnat and was published in 51, Ghat Farhad Beg, Chittagong.

(The) 'Madina' : It was edited by Nazir Ahmad Chowdhury, a renowned freedom fighter.

(The) 'Moslem Jagat'. : It was first published in 1929 in Calcutta. The editor was Abdur Rashid Siddiqi.

(The) 'Muhammadan Observer.' : It was first published in 1882 in Calcutta. Its founder editor was Shah Badiul Alam. The paper showed boldness in presenting the political views.

(The) 'Nalanda' : It was jointly edited by Ven. Dharmadhar Mahasthavir and Dr. Arabinda Barua.

(The) 'Naya Bangla' : It was edited by Ali Ahmad Oli Islamabadi, a revolutionary politician of his times.

(The) 'Panchajanya' : Being edited by Mahim Chandra Das it was published as a weekly during the Swadeshi movement period. The 'Panchajanya' was the spokesman paper of the district Congress Party. It was subjected to frequent government warning. The 'Desh' praised the 'Panchajanya' as a noteworthy local newspaper.<sup>6</sup> The circulation of the newspaper, edited by Ambika Charan Das was the largest in the district during the 1940s.

(The) 'Paramita' : edited by Asoke Barua

(The) 'Parvani' : annual literary journal. Subodh Ranjan Roy edited the journal while he was still a university student. It was first published in 1345 BE (1938) with major literary compositions. Many contemporary leading writers contributed articles and poems to this journal. Paper and printing deserve praise.

(The) 'Prabhat' : quarterly literary journal. It was a spokesman paper of the Chattogram Sahitya Parishad. The editor was Nabin Chandra Das, Kabi Gunakar who was also the president of the Sahitya Parishad. It was first published in January, 1913. The joint editor was poet Jibendra Kumar Dutta. The patrons were Rai Sarat Chandra Das Bahadur C I E and Rai Prasanna Kumar Roy Bahadur. The journal was printed at Chittagong Imperial Press. Compared to other contemporary periodicals its standard was high.

The periodical was published only for two years (1320 and 1321). The publication of the periodical discontinued after the death of the editor.

(The) 'Prantabasi' : The periodical is referred to by Purna Chandra Chowdhury in his 'Chattagramer Itihas'.

(The) 'Pratibha' : monthly periodical edited by Umesh Chandra Mutsuddi.

(The) 'Pujari' : monthly. First published in 1928. It was edited jointly by Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad and Manindra Lal Chowdhury.

(The) 'Purabi' : a literary periodical. First published in 1343 B E (1936). It was jointly edied by Ohidul Alam and Ashutosh Chowdhury. Both of them were members of the Pragati Lekhak Samgha. Preference was given to the members of the Lekhak Samgha in publishing their compositions. The periodical is of high standard in consideration of published materials, paper and printing.

(The) 'Purba Darpan' : edited by Janab Ahmadullah. First published in 1885. Circulation of the number of copies of this paper was 700<sup>7</sup> which suggests its popularity.

(The) 'Purba Pratiddhani' : fortnightly periodical. It was edited by Chandrakanta Chakravorty and printed in the press established by Kamalakanta Sen. It was the first news based periodical published in Chittagong. The periodical was published for the first time in Baisakh, 1286 (1879). In 1883, 474 copies were either sold or distributed.<sup>8</sup>

(The) 'Rashtrabarta' : editor Mohammad Lokman Khan Sherwani

(The) 'Rishitattva' : This religion based monthly periodical was first published in 1881, edited by Annada Charan Saraswati.<sup>9</sup>

(The) 'Sadhana' : monthly literary periodical. It was edited by Abdur Rashid Siddiqi. The periodical was first

published in 1326 BE (1919).

The Sadhana was a periodical of high standard. Compositions of contemporary renowned writers added to the good quality of the periodical.

(The) 'Sahityik' : It was edited by Ali Ahmad Oli Islamabadi

(The) 'Sakha' : monthly literary periodical. Edited by Prasanna Kumar Chowdhury and Kali Shankar Chakravorty.<sup>10</sup>

(The) 'Sambodhi' : monthly. It was edited jointly by Gajendra Lal Chowdhury and Dharendra Lal Barua. The periodical was first published in 1331 BE (1924) under the sponsorship of Bouddha Vihara, Chittagong. The compositions published in this periodical are of high quality.

(The) 'Sammilani' : It was first published in 1924 and continued till 1928. The periodical was edited by Abdul Monayem and published in Rangoon. It was the spokesman paper of Burma Labour Association.

(The) 'Sangram' : The periodical was established to spread the doctrine of communism. It was edited jointly by Nanigopal Sengupta and Kalpataru Sengupta. The issue of 23rd December, 1939 was proscribed by the government.

(The) 'Samghasakti' : It was edited by Prajnalok Mahasthavir. It was first published on the Aswini Purnima day, 1929. The periodical was the spokesman paper of the Buddhist Mission in Rangoon. The periodical won high estimation of such eminent persons as Rabindra Nath Tagore, Bimala Charan Laha and others.

(The) 'Sangsodhani' : It was the spokesman paper of the local Brahma Samaj. The periodical was first published in Jaistha, 1283 (1876) as a fortnightly journal. In 1286 it was converted to a weekly magazine. The periodical was edited by renowned educationist Kashi Chandra Gupta. The paper, printing and the contents of the periodical were of high standard and soon it became one of the most widely circulated

periodicals of the province. It won high praise of the progressive section of the society. According to the government report, the periodical, "....seems to be designed for educational purposes and promises to be a useful publication."<sup>11</sup>

(The) 'Satyabarta' : weekly news based periodical. This was the spokesmanpaper of the nationalist Muslims. At first it was edited and published by Dr. Mohammad Omar. Afterwards, Ghulam Sobhan Chowdhury became its editor and publisher. Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore complimented the paper on its good quality.<sup>12</sup>

(The) 'Soltan' : edited by Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi. It was published in Chittagong at the beginning of the 20th century. After some time the publishing office was transferred to Calcutta.<sup>13</sup> The 'Soltan' played a remarkable role in the socio-political revival of the Muslim society.

(The) 'Sukhi Pakhi' : monthly. The periodical was edited by Pyari Mohan Chowdhury.<sup>14</sup>

(The) 'Suniti' : fortnightly. The periodical was established in 1920s. Khan Bahadur Aman Ali was its editor. In 1936 Barrister Anwarul Azim succeeded him as the editor of the journal.

(The) 'Swadesh' : weekly. The periodical was jointly edited by Krishnendu Narayan Bhowmik and Murari Mohan Bhattacharya.

Editing of a periodical was a difficult job at that time. An editor was responsible for all the works relating to the planning and publication of the periodical. He had to revise the writings by checking and correcting the text and himself wrote editorial and some other kinds of articles. In cases he had to bear a portion of publication cost.

Throughout the British rule journalism suffered severe government restrictions. A number of Acts were passed from time to time to control press and publication. Among these Acts, the Vernacular Press Act, the Seditious Writings Act, the

Indian Penal Code 124 A, the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act, 1931, Newspaper Control Order, 1942 are noteworthy. Press censorship was strictly imposed on the newspapers and the periodicals. Any writings which were considered offensive were proscribed. Government policy was responsible for the dissolution of a number of newspapers and periodicals.

Increase of literacy undoubtedly widened the circle of newspaper readers; but the increase of newspaper readers does not necessarily mean the proportionate increase of purchasers or subscribers. The rising cost of the production of news periodicals could not be met with the income from selling the periodicals. The shortage of funds was responsible for the dissolution of many periodicals.

#### **Note :**

- 1 Brajendra Nath Bandyopadhyaya, *Bangla Samayik Patra*
- 2 Purna chandra Chowdhury, *Chattagramer Itihas*; the *Panchajanya*. Autumn Number, 1936
- 3 The *Dhaka Prakash*, 30 November, 1887
- 4 *Report on Newspaper*, No 48, 1887
- 5 The *Deshapriya*, 1344
- 6 The *Desh*
- 7 RNP, No 12, 1885
- 8 *Bangla Samayik Patra*, II, 28; RNP, No, 39, 1883
- 9 *Bangla Samayik Patra*, II, 34
- 10 *Panchajanya*, Autumn. Number 1936
- 11 RNP, 1879
- 12 The *Satyabarta*, 1344
- 13 The *Saogat*, 1347
- 14 The *Panchajanya*, Autumn Number 1936

## Chapter 15

### Art and Culture

From the latter part of the nineteenth century there was a new development in the cultivation of art and culture. A brief study of art and culture during the latter part of the British period may be made under the following heads.

**Painting.** A painter designs and creates artistic compositions employing various media and technique. Painting material in past ages consisted of a liquid substance consisting of a suspension of a pigment in oil or water.

The upper class people had a liking for portraying of persons by drawing or painting. Portrait of eminent persons was installed in the educational institutions, libraries, private houses etc.

Landscape painting gained much popularity in the twentieth century. It also included scenery painting, which was an essential part of theatre stage.

The most renowned painter during the 1920s and 1930s was Suren Roy. He studied painting in Calcutta for some years. He was specialized in the painting of natural scenery chiefly for theatrical stage. He was awarded many certificates and medals in recognition of his skill on the subject. His picture gallery house named Art House was situated at Lyall Road in Chittagong town. In this hall he taught the apprentices practical skill. His paintings were much admired by the elite of the town.

A painter also execute illustrations and designs for books and periodicals.

Designing interior decoration of religious edifices, public buildings and private residential houses were other functions

of a painter. Well to do people liked to have the surface of walls of their residence painted. In fact, every structure of their residential quarters were decorated with painting.

One of the celebrated art critic in the first half of the twentieth century was Jamini Kanta Sen. He studied art especially painting at Santiniketan. His famous book 'Art O Ahitagni' (in Bengali) is a masterpiece of art criticism. He was specialized in the subject of the Indo Muslim painting and wrote a large number of valuable articles on this theme. Another noted art critic was Ranjan Lal Sen.

**Architecture.** The European design influenced the construction of native buildings in the later part of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century. The most impressive building constructed during the British period is the Circuit House which was designed after the architectural style of the Victorian era. Both brick and decorative wooden blocks were used as material in this building. Tiles are used for covering roofs.

The work of building in the rural areas was traditionally entrusted to a carpenter (barui) and a earth worker (gharaja). They were skilled in construction work. They were capable of designing an entire structure according to the wishes of the family.

**Sculpture.** the sculpture is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as "a work of art that is a solid figure or object made by carving or shaping wood, stone, clay, metal etc." The technique of sculpture is principally evident in making images of deities. The figures are shaped from clay. The surface is painted in order to make it look more attractive. Images are essential part of Hindu worship of deities.

The act of sculpture also include making of jewellery, carving of statue, making child's toy in the shape of a person or an animal.

**Theatre.** A theatre is "a building or open space where

dramatic performances are given furnished with a stage for the actors and seats for the audience." Modern theatrical system in Chittagong started in the beginning of the twentieth century.

The subject matter of most of the theatrical performances were mythology, divine activities of the deities and social problems.

Producer, director and actors jointly contribute to the staging a drama. A producer is responsible for production of the theatre show. A director is expected to arrange suitable scenery designs, sound and lighting effects, costumes etc. during the performance of a play. He also instructs the actors. Actors are the most important personalities in drama production. They rehearse the parts and interpret role by speech and gesture. Songs are essential parts of theatrical performances.

The Swadeshi period witnessed the phenomenal growth of theatrical entertainment. The government restrictions on the performance of Swadeshi dramas, however, made it difficult for performing a patriotic play.

The post First World War period brought about changes in the methods of theatrical presentations. The stage director read manuscripts to the actors. Stage construction, dressing rooms, scenery, costumes, background music etc. became vital parts of the new methods of theatrical presentation.

Mr. Suresh Chandra Ghatak, the deputy magistrate and collector in the 1920s was an enthusiastic patron of cultural activities in Chittagong. He wrote a drama named 'Sati tirtha' which was successfully staged at the K C Dey Institute on the occasion of farewell ceremony of Mr A H Clayton, the magistrate collector of Chittagong. The performance was held in 1326 BE (1920).<sup>1</sup>

In July, 1932 Shishir Bhaduri and his troupe staged a drama, which was highly applauded by the audience.

Theatrical performances received fresh impetus during the latter part of the 1930s. On the sixth October, 1937, 'Jugabheri' was staged at the premises of the Municipal School. The famous drama 'Vidya Sundar' was successfully staged at Cinema Palace Hall on the 22nd and 23rd November, 1937.<sup>2</sup>

Theatrical presentations were also held in the residences of well-to-do people. On the 15th October, 1937, 'Gurudaksina' was staged at 'Prasanna Dham' in the town. It was rounded up by cultural functions and entertainments. On the 24th April, 1938 'Patibrata' was staged at the campus of the residence of Nirmal Chandra Ghosal by the Bani Mandir. The performance of the actors won high praise from the audience.

On the 14th and 15th January, 1939 a drama named 'Srikrishna' was successfully staged at the BOC club auditorium.

During the early part of the 20th century Shakespearean plays became very much popular with the English educated Bengalees. In the beginning of 1930s Shakespearean plays were successfully staged in the auditorium of Assam Bengal Railway Institute. The European officers cooperated with the actors and producers of the plays.<sup>3</sup>

There were no structures specifically built for dramatic performance. An auditorium built by Kamala Kanta Sen during the Swadeshi period was used as theatre hall. It became known as Kamal Babu's Theatre Hall. Some of the other buildings in which theatrical shows were held were K C Dey Institute, B O C Club, Railway Institute, J M Sen Hall etc.

The presentation of plays on stage became very much popular in the rural areas in the latter part of the 1930s. There was hardly any village where at least one drama had not been staged in each year. Bank buildings, club halls, school ground were used as theatre halls in the rural areas. The acting in plays was performed by the local people who did it to give enjoyment to the village folk.

Playing of dramas on the stage by school and college students was gradually becoming popular from the beginning of the twentieth century.

**Jatra** or open space theatre. The Jatra is an indigenous theatrical performance consisting of a dramatic text combined with singing and playing on instruments. Throughout the period of the freedom movement, the patriotic Jatra was staged to arouse the patriotic feeling of the people against foreign rule.

**Music.** Music is an art which is combiney produced by the voice and the musical instruments. There were four kinds of music which were practised by the musicians of Chittagong. These were (a) religious such as kirtan, bhajan etc., (b) classical based on ragas, (c) patriotic, based on Swadeshi spirit, and (d) Rabindra Sangeet.

**Musical Institutions.** In the first half of the twentieth century a number of institutions, connected with the cultivation of music were established. Some of them are mentioned below.

1. **Arya Sangeet Samiti.** The Arya Sangeet Samiti was the first and foremost musical society of Chittagong. It was established on August 23, 1906 (The Janmashtami, Bhadra, 1313 BE) during the Swadeshi movement. Its aim was to arouse patriotic feeling by presenting Swadeshi songs.

From the year of its establishment down to the end of the British rule the Arya Sangeet Samiti was the leading music organization in Chittagong. The patronage and cooperation of the elite group gave the organization an orderly structure. During this period the presidents of the Samiti sucessively were Rajani Kanta Rai Dastidar, Rai Nabin Chandra Dutta Bahadur, Rai Saheb Lalit Kumar Sen, Tripura Charan Chowdhury, Suresh Chandra Basu, Bagala Prasanna Chakravorty, Tripura Charan Chowdhury (second time).

The Arya Sangeet Samiti started giving schooling to the

persons especially the young groups in early 1920s. In the month of Aswin, 1329 (1922) the Samiti opened its training branch named Vidyapith to teach the trainees the technique in music and dance. The art of acting was also included in the curriculum. In later times the course of systematic instruction was introduced.

The chief programmes of the Arya Sangeet Samiti are playing on instruments, vocal songs, arranging musical programmes, conducting rehearsals and public performances.

The Arya Sangeet Samiti achieved a virtual monopoly in the public presentation of patriotic, Rabindra, Nazrul, classical and folk songs.

**2. Music Training Centre.** It was established in 1934 by Mrs B Mukherji, a renowned artist of her times, in order to give training to the girl students who had gained admission to the institution to learn music and dance. The artists of the institution performed cultural functions in the public halls on arranged occasions.

**3. Sangeet Parishad.** This musical organization was founded jointly by Gangapada Acharya and his brother Sripada Acharya. Sourindra Lal Das Gupta (Chulu Babu) the renowned musician joined this organization as music teacher in early 1940s. The institution earned reputation as a place of learning skill in music.

**4. Bani Mandir.** It was established in 1937 by a group of young artistes.<sup>4</sup> Performance in cultural functions and staging of dramas were its principal programmes. On June 10, 1938 it presented patriotic songs in the J M Sen Hall on the occasion of the reception given to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The Association conducted musical programmes in the meeting of the Students Federation held on July 9, 1938 in the J M Sen Hall.

**Musicians.** A number of musicians spent their illustrious lives in different times of the British period. Some of the talented singers are mentioned below.

Shyama Charan Khastagir, the youngest brother of Dr. Annada Charan Khastagir was a skilled singer of devotional songs and showed proficieney in playing on musical instruments. He was a very popular artiste during his times.<sup>5</sup> Poet Nabin Chandra Sen was full of praise for the talent of Shyama Charan.

Bipin Chandra Dutta was the youngest son of Ramkinu Dutta. On account of his talent in vocal music Keshab Chandra Sen named him “the young bird of Chittagong.”

Mohini Mohan Das was the greatest singer of patriotic songs during the Swadeshi period. In most cases he himself wrote songs in order to sing them in public.

Suren Das and Dhiren Das, the two brothers were reputed classical singers.

Gangapada Acharya won high reputation in sitar recital as well as in vocal music in the 1930s. His younger brother Sripada Acharya was also an illustrious singer.

Gopal Dasgupta Banitirtha, a gifted musician gained reputation as a great musical talent and renowned composer during his times. His role as music director of stage show was most often highly applauded by the audience.

Dhyanendra Nath Sen was a reputed singer during 1930s. A number of his songs were reproduced on gramophone disc.

Rukmini Ranjan Acharya Goswami was a celebrated kirtan singer.

Salamat Ali Dewan had the reputation of being a renowned instrumentalist and vocal singer.

Upendra Lal Chowdhury received training in vocal music in Calcutta. He was appointed music teacher of Chakma Raj family.

Jyotsna Sen received training in vocal music in the Arya Sangeet Samiti. She was specialised in classical songs, Kheyal, Kirtan and Bhajan.

One of the most talented vocal musicians was Gaurikedar Bhattacharya. A large number of his songs have been recorded on gramophone disc. His programme on stage show gave much enjoyment to the audience.

Mohammad Nasir received training in music in the Arya Sangeet school of music and gained mastery of folk songs and regional songs. Sourinda Lal Dasgupta was well versed in singing. Priyada Ranjan Sengupta was skilled in different types of music.

Some noted vocal musicians of 1940s were Anil Kumar Guha, Shiv Shankar Mitra, Jiban Das, Bimal Dutta, Bidhubhushan Chowdhury, Kalisankar Das, Shasanka Dhar, Dhiren Sen, Binod Chakravorty, Professor (Dr.) Subodh Ranjan Roy, Sudhamoy Sen.

**Folk songs.** These songs are written by local poets and are being sung in the traditional style. Folk songs are of two types, religious and secular. Religious songs include Agamani songs Maijbhandari Gan, Buddha Samkirtan etc. Secular songs include nuptial songs, Chaitra Sankranti songs etc.

One of the most popular dramatised form of musical performance is kabi songs or kabir gan. It is, in fact, a type of spoken dialogue in versified form. Usually, two kabis take part in the contest. They can readily compose poem to be sung at the function. Their poetical contest brighten up the audience. Some of the noted kabis in the twentieth century were Ramesh Sil, Fani Barua, Raigopal Das. Their contributions to kabi songs are so vast that their achievement can not be discussed in short space.

**Instrumental music.** A person when plays a musical instrument alone is called soloist. He, however, is supported by other instrumentalists.

There were a number of musicians who were specialized in playing on particular instrument such as sitar, sarod, sarangi, bina, flute, sanai, tabla, mridangam, pakhwaj,

ektara, dotara, harmonium.

**Concert Music.** Concerted music was generally connected with an orchestra. An orchestra is a group of people who play on various musical instruments together. The orchestrator determines instruments to be employed in the performance.

**Orchestra.** Orchestra became much popular in late 1930s. Presentation of orchestra was an essential part of cultural functions. Renowned musicians and instrumentalists participated in the orchestra.

The most celebrated orchestra director was Sangeetacharya Suren Das, the founder of Arya orchestra. He conducted a number of orchestral performances in public functions both in Chittagong and in Calcutta. Another renowned musician connected with orchestral music was Siddeswar Dasgupta.

**Opera.** An opera is a “dramatic work in which all or most of the words are sung to music.” Music is an essential part in opera and opera is an essential part in theatrical performances. In the early part of the twentieth century there were a number of opera parties which provided entertainment for the listeners.

**Band party.** Band music was essential in the performance especially of Jatra plays. A concert room was assigned to the band party adjacent to the stage on which the Jatra plays were exhibited.

**Dance.** Indian dance is the symbolic expression of some ideas through rhythmic movement of limbs. Three types of dances gained currency in the early part of the twentieth century. (A) Classical dance includes bharat natyam, kathak, kathakali, manipuri etc. In classical dance gesture and stylistic expression are the chief characteristics. (B) In solo dance the artist expresses the experience through harmonious physical movement. (C) Group dance symbolises various

themes of social life, such as struggle for independence, planting of food plants, harvesting of crops, rowing by the crew, observation of marriage ceremony etc. These types of dance became popular in early 1940s. All types of dance are accompanied by orchestras.

**Nritya natya or dance drama.** Nritya natya or dramatised production of music appears to have gained popularity in late nineteen thirties and forties. On the 14th and the 15th January, 1939 a dance drama named 'Devdasi' was staged at the BOC club sponsored by BOC authorities.<sup>6</sup>

Among the renowned dancers Bulbul Chowdhury occupies foremost position. While he was a I A student in the Presidency College he joined the dance troupe of Sadhana Bose. Later on he organized a dance troupe independently which presented a number of public shows in Calcutta. In the following years he along with his troupe travelled in the European cities and staged exhibitions of Indian dance in the local theatre halls. Move with rhythmical steps, classical gestures and expression of feelings through physical movements characterized his performances.

**Tagore dance drama.** It is characterized by moving body in a rhythmical way to the music composed by Rabindra Nath Tagore. Rabindra nritya natya gained growing popularity in the post First World War period.

Tagore dance drama is of two types. First, performed to narrate a story; second, performed to narrate a particular seasonal theme. Rabindra nritya natya was appreciated more for its aesthetic ideas.

In 1934 the Music Training Centre staged Barsha Mangal, a musical dance drama of Tagore in the Railway Institute Hall. It gained much praise from both press and public.

On the sixth and the seventh May, 1935 the Music Training Centre staged 'Basanta Utsav' at K C Dey Institute on the occasion of jubilee celebration of the reign of Emperor George V. The police superintendent Mr. Kelley and his wife,

additional super intendent of police Mr Cook and his wife and a large number of distinguished guests witnessed the performance.<sup>7</sup>

In 1941 Uday Sankar a dancer of high distinction and his partner performer Simki presented a dance sequence at the stage of Cinema Palace. Their performance was greatly cheered by the audience.

Kanaklata, the sister of Uday Sankar scored septicular success in her dance performance on the 22nd through the 24th January, 1938. The performance was staged at jubilee cinema hall. The background music was directed by Suren Das.

Folk theme in dance. A great variety of folk and popular regional dances were current in the rural areas. The most popular dance form was Gajan nritya used to be held as year ending festival dance. On this occasion the performers with the help of mask and make up provided a variety of spectacular acts for the entertainment of spectators.

#### **Note :**

1 The *Sadhana, Jaistha*, 1327, p. 57

2 The *Deshapriya*, 1344

3 The *Anjali*, 1340, p. 192

4 The *Deshapriya*, May, 1938, p. 26

5 The *Jugadharma*, 23 July, 1935; Nabin Chandra Sen, *Amar Jibon*

6 The *Weekly Deshapriya*, 24 January, 1939, p. 22

7 The *Jugadharma*, July, 1935, p. 7

## Chapter 16

### Economic Condition

A study of economic condition is connected with the agriculture, industry, trade, transport and development of wealth.

**Classification of land.** Land is the chief source of living and of earning rent. W W Hunter refers to three descriptions of land in Chittagong. (a) Abadi or cultivable land. These are classified into three denominations i.e., taraf, lakhiraj and khas. Taraf is the system of the ownership of large tract of land being vested in a land lord. Lakhiraj means 'rent free land'. Khas land means the 'estates retained in the hand of government.' (b) Noabad means newly cultivated land. (c) Waste land (muddat or Khilah) means an area of land that cannot be used for growing crops on but is used for other purposes.

There are plenty of cultivable (abadi) land everywhere in the district. Referring to the statement of the Board of Revenue, Hunter writes that large area of cultivable land was not brought under cultivation till the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> In 1931 the percentage of the total cultivable area was 54.3 percent and the percentage of the cultivated area was 43.3.<sup>2</sup>

#### A. Agriculture

Agriculture was the principal economic activity in past times. It was related to the production of consumers goods, raw material for industry, and export earnings.

**Food grains:** Among the food grains rice and pulses are important. Buchanan Hamilton praises the fertility of soil in central Chittagong and says that "in favourable seasons, they are enabled in these fields to have annually three crops of rice."<sup>3</sup> According to the Bengal census report of 1931, 92.5 per cent of

cultivated area was under rice production. Pulses are the edible seeds of various leguminous crops. A variety of pulses, such as mung, musuri, mash kalai, felon were produced abundantly in the district. Food grains after having been harvested were stored in golas (bamboo made ware houses) and in matkas (earthen jars)

**Vegetables.** Countless number of vegetables were grown especially during winter season. The edible portions are leaf, root, the flower buds in cases. Potato, tomato and spinach cultivation was introduced in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Onions and garlics were widely used as vegetables and for flavouring various culinary preparations. These were generally cultivated as winter crops. Various types of pepper were produced in the district. The most widely cultivated pepper was the chilli type of pepper. Chilli in green form was used along with vegetables. Dried chilli was used as a flavouring in cooking.

**Fruit crops.** The major fruit crops that are being cultivated since very ancient times are mango, jackfruit, coconut, batabi, banana, black berry, kamranga, papaya, sweetsop, lemon, litchi, tamarind etc. Pine apple (anaras) and guava plantation was introduced by the Portuguese as early as the seventeenth century.

**Sugar plants.** Sugarcane and date palm are the principal sources of sugar and molasses. Sugar in the form of granules was not much familiar to the people till the nineteenth century. Dr Buchanan Hamilton (1798), saw extensive cultivation of sugar cane and manufacture of molasses. During his journey through the district he "heard the cracking of several of the mills employed in expressing the juice."<sup>4</sup> W W Hunter writes, "sugar appears to be nowhere manufactured in the district; molasses are made both from sugarcane and date palm juice."<sup>5</sup> Date palm trees were cultivated throughout the district. The thick date palm syrup of dark brown in colour after boiling is very much popular especially when eaten with

various kinds of food made from a mixture of powdered rice, sugar, molasses etc. that is prepared in an oven.

**Oil seeds.** Various types of oil seeds were grown both for cooking and for fuelling of lamps. Castor seed (peri) yields castor oil which is used pharmaceutically and as laxative. According to Buchanan Hamilton, "this (castor seed) by the natives is used for the lamp."<sup>6</sup>

**Mustard** is cultivated chiefly for edible oil. According to the Bengal District Gazetteer Report, "2000 acres of land in Chittagong were under mustard seed cultivation in 1930-31."

**Tea plantation.** The condition of soil and climate is favourable for tea plantation. The green leaves, plucked from the garden are dried and tea is prepared by different processes.

Tea plantation was introduced in Chittagong by the European tea planters in the middle of the nineteenth century. One Mr. Squashi established a tea garden in the sadar subdivision in 1840. It was named Pioneer Tea Garden.<sup>7</sup> In 1843 for the first time black tea was prepared from the green leaves plucked from the garden.<sup>8</sup>

Since that time tea plantation has been increased considerably. According to the administrative report, tea was "the most important article of manufacture in Chittagong."<sup>9</sup> The report writes that the number of tea gardens in Chittagong was 24 and the total acreage under tea plantation was 4,128 Almost all the tea gardens were under European management.

The tea plantation continued to be thriving during the successive years. According to the Bengal District Gazetteer, in Chittagong, 6100 acres of land were covered with tea plants during the year 1930-31.

The prospect of tea market attracted the rich native individuals to invest their surplus money in tea plantation.

The important tea gardens of Chittagong towards the end of the British rule were located in Baramasia, Udalia,

Andharmanik, Halda, Rangapani, Karaldenga, Datmara, Chandranagore, Koyachhara, Fanoon (Fenua), Thandachhari, Kodala, Patiya, Sanguvalley.<sup>11</sup>

**Betel nut and betel leaves.** Betel nut is the seed of a palm like plant which grows luxuriantly everywhere in Chittagong. Buchanan Hamilton (1798) saw betel nut plantations in several places of Chittagong.<sup>12</sup> Betel leaves, a climbing plant grow abundantly mainly in the plains. Betel nut, cut into small pieces wrapped in the betel leaves is chewed by people.

**Tobacco.** Tobacco is native to tropical America. It was brought into Chittagong by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. Since that time it is being widely cultivated for its leaves which are used for smoking. Buchanan Hamilton (1798) saw "plantations of tobacco" in several places of Chittagong.<sup>13</sup> According to the Agricultural statistics of 1930-31, 2,600 acres of land were under tobacco plantation.<sup>14</sup>

**Cotton.** The fibre around its seeds is used to make thread. Cotton cloths were manufactured from the cotton hairs imported from Chittagong Hill Tracts. Imported cotton was kept in the stores (gola) situated at Kapasgola in Chittagong town.

**Indigo.** It is a blue dye obtained from indigo plants, which were cultivated in the district as early as the eighteenth century. Mr Sumner, while he was the collector of Chittagong in 1780 gave "a grant of land to one John Gray for the cultivation of the indigo plant, and this grant was confirmed by the Governor General in Council." Mr Gray died in 1782 and "his land which would appear to have been in Satkania, passed to others."<sup>15</sup> In 1788 one Mr Benjamin Boyce was given permission by authorities for the manufacture of indigo in Chittagong. Mr Boyce, however, failed in achieving anything.<sup>16</sup>

In 1798 Buchanan saw "the remains of indigo plantations" in central Chittagong. One of the planters was Mr Sherman Bird, the collector of Chittagong.<sup>17</sup>

Indigo plantation never flourished in Chittagong. According to the 1872 census report, there were only eleven indigo manufacturers in Chittagong. The introduction of synthetic indigo in the 1940s damaged the indigo plantation so badly that it practically died away.

### B. Forestry and forest products

Formerly, large tracts of land were covered with dense forests, the economic value of which was immense. It supplied, timber, bamboo, wild leaves, honey and wax, wild grass (chhan) and various other things.

**Timber.** A large number of people sustained their livelihood by cutting down forest trees. Their important functions were felling trees and sawing them into logs, launching logs into rivers and guiding them downstream.

A great variety of trees grow in Chittagong. Trees suitable for timber are Chittagong teak, jarul, gamari, karai, champalaish etc.

Wood planks were prepared from suitable trees for ocean going vessels and railroad track. Wood planks were exported to European countries till the nineteenth century.

**Bamboo.** Objects made from bamboo are common in Chittagong and vary from everyday articles to artistic craft products. Bamboo grows rapidly. It is found either in the wild or as cultivated plant in all parts of the district.

**Honey.** Bee produces honey and wax. Honey was used especially as ingredient of Ayurvedic medicine and wax was used as polish for wood.

**Garjan oil.** It was an essential commodity. Processes of extracting garjan oil has been described by Dr. Buchanan Hamilton (1798) in his travelling accounts.<sup>18</sup> According to him, "in the island of Mascally (Maheshkhali) much Gurgeon (garjan) oil is extracted."<sup>19</sup>

Administration of forestry was vested in a deputy conservator of forest. In 1864, protection of government forests

from destruction was taken in hand. Conservator of forest in all the districts were appointed.<sup>20</sup> Since that time plantation has characterized most of the reserve forests.

**Elephant.** Kheda or elephant catching means an "enclosure constructed to entrap elephants."<sup>21</sup> Regarding the economic value of the Kheda, Hamilton writes, "A considerable profit accrues to government from the elephants caught in the forests here, which are of an excellent quality.... The best are received from the contractor under certain conditions, and agreeably to a fixed standard of height and other qualities."<sup>22</sup> Elephant teeth as an article of trade is referred to by Buchanan Hamilton.

### C. Marine products

**Fishing.** Chittagong is the largest fishing district in Bangladesh. The reference to the fisheries and rent payment to the government (mai mahal) can be found in 1772-73 assessment.<sup>23</sup>

The rivers and the seashore of the district were stocked with fish. According to Hunter, "the sea and river fisheries of Chittagong are very valuable and form a means of livelihood to a large section of the population."<sup>24</sup> As regards the fresh water fish, Hunter specifically says that the Karnafuli, Halda, Sankha and Chandkhali were "the chief localities for inland fisheries."<sup>25</sup> Regarding coastal fishery, the collector reports in 1873, "by far the most extensive fishery "was carried on near the island of Sonadia". The chief function of a fisherman included catching of fish in inland or in coastal waters.

**Dried fish.** Making dried fish was an important means of livelihood. In the coastal areas of southern Chittagong the immigrant Rakhaings engaged in making dried fish. Referring to their occupation Buchanan Hamilton writes, "Drying prawns was amongst them a principal occupation. These they export in great quantities to Chittagong, Dacca, Calcutta and other places in Bengal where they are in great demand among all ranks

both of Hindus and Mohammadans<sup>26</sup>

Salt. Salt producing areas were known as nimak eyoze mahal during the Mughal and the early British periods. Salt manufacturers were called malangis. Mr H J S Cotton gives the following information about the salt trade in Chittagong.

In 1770s Mohammad Mirza (the constructor of Mirzar pol on the Hathazari Road) had the contract for all the salt of the district for a period of five years. Under the terms of his contract he was bound to supply yearly 80,000 maunds of salt for the use of the Company. There was also an English Salt Agent on behalf of the Company. Sir John Forbes is the first of whom there is any record. He was succeeded by Mr. John Grant on the 22nd June, 1774. Mr. Grant was succeeded by Mr Thomas Calvert. On the 29th September, 1780, the government resolved that "all the salt of the provinces should be manufactured and disposed of for the immediate account of the Company under the superintendence of a comptroller and management of provincial agents. Mr. George Vansittart was appointed first comptroller and by the same order Mr. Robert Worledge was appointed Salt Agent in the Chittagong district.<sup>27</sup>

From the time of Verelst (1761) to that of Wilkins (1772) the zamindars (in the coastal areas) "were by degrees deprived of the privilege of manufacturing salt."<sup>28</sup> The government gained the monopoly of trade in salt. The principal salt works in 1775 were situated in Nizampur, Baharchhara, Jaldi (Banskhali), Mobarakghona, Bansberia, Akalpura, Chaufaldandi, Cutubdia, Patenga, Parkee etc. "On the sea coast" writes Hamilton (1820) "the government have a large establishment for the manufacture of salt."<sup>29</sup>

In 1833, by the Prohibition Act, manufacture of salt by the natives was prohibited. From 1860s salt began to be imported from England. Buckland writes, "At the commencement of 1862-63 Liverpool salt had in consequence, complete possession of the market....It was determined that the Chittagong salt agency should be closed."<sup>30</sup> In September, 1898 orders were

issued under section 6 of the Indian Salt Act, XII of 1882, absolutely prohibiting the manufacture of salt" in coastal districts including Chittagong.<sup>31</sup>

The imported salt was stored in warehouses called golas. In 1917 there were five salt golas at Chittagong maintained by public works department.<sup>32</sup> The total import of salt into Chittagong increased 57 percent in 1922-23.<sup>33</sup>

There was an increasing demand during the period from the Swadeshi to the Satyagraha for producing salt indigenously. But the authorities held the view that "conditions were not suitable for the manufacture of salt on a commercial scale."<sup>34</sup>

In the legislative council session Dharendra Lal Barua of Chittagong asked the government to revive salt industry. He says, "...so far as my information goes the monthly consumption of salt in Bengal is 50,000 maunds, two thirds of which is imported....Bengal is not producing even a small fraction of the demand....An encouragement of this industry will greatly relieve employment and increase the national wealth."<sup>35</sup>

#### D. Petroleum and petroleum products

Petroleum was found under the ground and was used to produce earth oil and kerosene. Earth oil was a commodity useful for domestic purposes and a valuable article of trade. Referring to a source, giving its use in 1810 'Hobson Jobson' writes, "Petroleum called by the natives earth oil,... which.... imported from Pegu, Ava and the Aracan coast."<sup>36</sup>

Extraction of petroleum in the British India first took place in Burma. The Burmah Oil Company, the largest crude oil producer, surveyed, organized and supervised the drilling operations in the Irrawaddy basin area. Towards the close of the nineteenth century the Burmah Oil Company engaged in processing crude oil to produce kerosene. The use of kerosene brought a great change in the domestic lighting system.

The Burmah Oil company conducted a project to examine

the existence of mineral oil in southern Chittagong. The company "continued to prospect for mineral oil in the Cox's Bazar subdivision."<sup>37</sup>

## Industry

Industry in the British period was of two types, cottage industry and heavy industry. Cottage industry developed primarily in the rural areas whereas the heavy industry developed in the urban areas.

### (a) Cottage Industry

In the cottage industry the manufacturer employed his own skill, procured instruments by his own money and marketed the finished goods at his own initiative. His own humble dwelling or his small workshop in a bazar was the principal location of cottage industry.

The craftsmen carry on the works of art through generations and their hereditary skill has been chiefly responsible for their excellence.

Cottage industry is also known as folk crafts. Folk crafts are divided into multitude of items such as pottery and ceramics, wood and bamboo articles, metal and leather objects, dyeing and weaving, needleworks and embroidery, objects for children to play with. Some of the traditional folk crafts are listed below.

**Rope making.** Rope was made by twisting strands of hemp, jute and some other kinds of fibres. Strong and thick rope was needed in anchoring a ship, carrying a log etc.

**Mat or pati.** A densely woven strong thread is called pati. Reeds and canes for the manufacturing of fine matting called sital pati grows in damp localities.<sup>38</sup> According to the administrative report, the manufacture of sital pati prospered in the district.<sup>39</sup> A small flat piece was also used as seat.

**Pottery.** Many types of earthenware have been in use in the district since time immemorial. Pottery is made wherever there is suitable clay and sufficient wood for the open fire in

which the pots are fired. According to Hunter, common kinds of pottery were made in all parts of the district.<sup>40</sup> Potteries were designed for boiling foods, eating and drinking as well as kitchen utensils.

Basketry is made by either the simple inter weaving of elements or by the coiling of multiple strands. Simple inter-weaving system is employed in making kharang (grass or leaves carrying baskets), jhuri (earth carrying instrument), dhochana (instrument purifying rice, fish etc.) and other equipments.

Net making. Net is made of cotton thread. It is woven tied together with small space in between. The net is used particularly for catching fish, hunting wild animal and entrapping bird.

Umbrella as protection against sun and rain had been in use before the British period. The umbrella handle making was an important item of cottage industry. It was chiefly located at Sitakunda. Bamboo umbrella was manufactured in Cox's Bazar sub-division by the Rakhaings. British made umbrella was brought into use in the middle of the nineteenth century.

A circular canopy of wild leaves called kurup with a bamboo made frame was used by the people. Referring to this type of umbrella Buchanan writes, "...the leaf of a dwarf palm called karoo (kurup) and used for making umbrellas."<sup>41</sup> A kind of canopy of wild leaves called jnuir that is hanged from head down to waist specially spreading back side as a shelter from rains is essential for a peasant.

Oil mill. A large block of wood used in grinding oil seeds to express oil from them. The machine (ghani) is operated by a pair of bullocks.

According to the report on the administration of Bengal, rope making industry, the umbrella handle making industry, oil mill, fishing net, sital pati prospered in Chittagong.<sup>42</sup>

Hand made paper. Paper was made from the soft part of

wood and fibrous plant. These were broken into small pieces and crushed until it was soft. The powder then cooked gently until it forms a pulp. The material then used to make paper.

**Wood work.** Wood workers known as sutradhar cut, shape and erect various types of wooden structures and decorative objects.

**Leather work.** Luxury garments were made from fur that grows on the body of some animals. Fur of beaver was of much demand in Europe. It was an important item of export.<sup>43</sup>

There was a class of tanners (charmakar) who made leather from hides and skins. They also made footwear of different designs.

**Weaving and embroidery.** Weaving means to make clothes on a machine called tant and the people who are employed in weaving are called tanti.

Referring to the cloth manufacture during the early British rule H J S Cotton writes, "The principal cloth aurunghs (in 1770s) in the interior of the Chittagong district were at Meer Ka Sarai, Banscolly, Hazaree's Haut and Duckin seak."<sup>44</sup>

According to Hunter, "Coarse cloth was woven in the mid-nineteenth century."<sup>45</sup> "The Jugis of Chittagong manufacture coarse cloth." Lungi "made out of the silk and cotton cloth is woven by the Magh women (of Cox's Bazar)"<sup>46</sup>

A weaving school was established at Cox's Bazar to train the Rakhaings in weaving industry. In 1914 it was "becoming popular .... and the accommodation was increased."<sup>47</sup>

According to government report, four more weaving schools were established in 1914. These were 1. Katirhat Weaving School, 2. Fatehnagar Arya Weaving School, 3. Weaving school at Hulain, and 4. Muslim Shilpa Vidyalaya at Baraiar Dhala.<sup>48</sup>

The Swadeshi and Independence movement gave an impetus to the production of khaddar. Khaddar factories sprang up in different places of the district.<sup>49</sup>

The process by which a piece of fabric is made with stitches usually using coloured thread was a familiar form of embroidery. Kantha or embroidered quilt is one of the finest specimen of needlework. In the 19th century, kantha manufacturing techniques became more intricate. Nakshi kanthas were woven with different motifs. Making of embroidered quilt was the monopoly of women. They perform designs, operate needle works and other related tasks.

Sari, the main piece of woman clothing was woven by tantis, a class of weavers who lived by weaving chhapai or printed sari. Variety of colours were produced mostly from vegetable sources. The bark, root, leaves, seeds of certain plants and trees were used for dyeing. Towards the close of the 19th century the old processes of dyeing was replaced by synthetic dyes imported from Europe.

The manufacturers produced goods by his own effort. Sometime the merchants advanced money and occasionally materials to the manufacturers who produced finished goods in their homes and turned them over to the merchants who carried these to distant markets for profit.

The cottage industry gradually declined towards the end of the British rule owing chiefly to the want of government patronage. The indigenous producers could not compete with the foreign importers either on price or of quality. An Honourable member in 1939 informed the legislative council that, "...it is a fact that the Pathantooli Mahalla of the Chittagong Municipality, Satkania and Patiya were once famous for cottage industries of rope making, weaving, net making and hand paper making. These industries are now fast dying out."<sup>50</sup>

### (b) Heavy Industry

The availability of raw materials, the surplus money of rich individuals and the credit facilities offered by the banks created a climate of investment which helped the establishment of a few industrial enterprises.

The ginning mills. The ginning mill (machine for separating cotton fibres from its seeds) of the Kundu family and the ginning factory of Messrs Jamal Brothers were in operation before the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>51</sup> The two mills faced crisis "owing to the war and the consequent difficulty in exporting cotton due to the dislocation of shipping."<sup>52</sup>

Cotton textile mill. The first cotton textile mill named Deshapriya Cotton Mills was established in 1936. Dhuti, sari and other types of Knitted cloth were made in the factory.

Jute textile mill. The Karnafuli Jute Mill was established by a corporate body of rich individuals in the latter part of the 1930s. It was visited by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on June 11, 1938. The Netaji praised the enterprising individuals for their efforts to build this establishment.

Chittagong Chemical Industries Ltd. The concern was registered on the 7th July, 1924. It, however, had to wind up its activities after sometime under adverse circumstances. The government expressed in the legislative council of its ignorance with regard to its existence in 1934.<sup>53</sup>

Chittagong Match Factory. It was established in 1936 at Firingi Bazar. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose visited the factory on June 11, 1938 and praised the enterprising individuals who were connected with the running of the factory.

An organization named the Chittagong Industrial Development Commission was founded in 1938.<sup>54</sup> The aim of this commission was to take care of the existing industries and to give encouragement to establish new ones.

Ship building industry. Chittagong was famous for ship building industry from very early times. "Islamabad (Chittagong)" writes Walter Hamilton in 1820, "being extremely well situated for external commerce as well as for the construction of ships of large dimensions and of these a considerable number are built annually, both of imported timber and of that indigenous to the country."<sup>55</sup> The ship building industry was located mainly

in the port area. Yakub Ali Dobhash (1836-1909) and Abdul Haq Dobhash (1874-1951) were some of the notable persons who were connected with the ship building industry.

In 1853 Mr. Currie of the Board of Revenue described the port as a shipowning rather than a trading place.<sup>56</sup>

W W Hunter's narration gives information about the gradual decline of ship building industry in Chittagong in the latter part of the nineteenth century. He writes, "ship building was till the year 1873, carried on to a considerable extent at Chittagong. In 1860-61 sixteen vessels were built of a total burthen of 2,036 tons.... In 1870-71 six vessels of a total burthen of 1,028 tons. In the year 1873-74 only four vessels were built. In 1874-75 only one vessel of 286 tons."<sup>57</sup>

The decline of the ship building industry in Chittagong was due to the negative policy of the government. Mr Nur Ahmad, chairman of Chittagong municipality strongly criticised the government policy on the ship building industry and made the government responsible for its decline. He says in the provincial council,

In Chittagong, in our infancy whenever we went by the side of the river Karnaphuli, we found that it was full of ships so much so that any casual observer from a distance might have taken it to be a shipyard and not a river. But by the enactment of the cruel law which prohibited Indian ships from going out in the open sea; from that time ship building has died out. During the last war in 1914, when Government again permitted building of ships and allowed Indian ships to go out in the open sea that industry revived and people began to build ships. But after the war, the law was again enforced and after that ship building died out. For that reason, government should be asked to revive that industry which once brought prosperity to Bengal.<sup>58</sup>

**Pahartali Railway Workshop.** The Pahartali Railway Workshop was built in the 1930s to manufacture railway equipment and to repair railway machinery parts. It was the

biggest railway workshop in undivided Bengal.

### Agricultural and Industrial Exhibitions and Fair.

On November 26, 1919 the Chattagram Krishi O Shilpa Samiti was established under the auspices of the Chittagong Association. The Samiti in one of its meetings adopted a resolution that it would organize agricultural and industrial exhibition annually in the town. From 1920 down to the end of the British rule the Samiti annually organized agricultural and industrial exhibitions and fairs. The exhibitions were generally held in a public place to provide the visitors an opportunity for enjoying the show.

The first agricultural and industrial exhibition was held on the 11th February, 1920, with a special opening ceremony. Manufactured products very much pleased the visitors.

The next agricultural and industrial exhibition held in 1921 was inaugurated by Barrister Purna Chandra Sen.

The agricultural and industrial exhibition was held on September 9, 1923. The exhibition was inaugurated by the renowned scientist Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy. Acharya Roy praised the folk craftsmen for their skill in making beautiful articles. He also called upon the well to do people to patronize the native manufacturers.

The agricultural and industrial exhibitions could not be arranged regularly due to political unrest especially during the early part of the 1930s.

The agricultural, industrial and health exhibition sponsored by the Chittagong Association was held at Hand's Park in March, 1937. The success of the exhibition gained newspaper publicity. In this exhibition culture of human health was included as an important item. Keeping of good health, food safely, animal and plant health and some other items were put on for a public show.

The next agricultural, industrial and health exhibition was held on Friday, March 4, 1938, Satsamgha Nari

Shilpashram, Helping Hand Society, Rajbandi Shilpalaya and some other organizations opened their stalls in the exhibition. Handicrafts of various kinds attracted the visitors in large number.

Exhibitions were also held in different parts of the district. The industrial, agricultural and health exhibition was held on February 6, 1938 in the school campus of the Bhatikhain village. The exhibition was ceremoniously inaugurated by Mr Gladis E Wait, the district judge. Mrs. S L Khastagir, secretary to the Helping Hand Society and Khan Bahadur Mohammad Ali Azam, registrar, co-operative society actively co-operated with the management body. The exhibition lasted for five days. Two kinds of exhibits exposed in the stalls, one of paper manufacturing and the other of embroidery works by the Helping Hand Society earned much appreciation.

In Cox's Bazar town the agricultural, industrial and health exhibition was held on February 1 through February 7, 1938 in a festive atmosphere. The stalls showing the local Rakhain handicrafts drew attention of the visitors.

The annual agricultural, industrial and health exhibition sponsored by Chittagong Association was held on March 7, 1939 at Hands Park on a large scale. The wife of divisional commissioner, Mrs Martin opened the exhibition. District magistrate Mr P M Mc Williams I C S presided over the inaugural ceremony. Mv. Nur Ahmad, chairman of the Chittagong municipality, Barrister M A Azim, chairman of the District Board, Mr. N N Islam, bank manager, Mr. Nagendra Lal Das, co-chairman of the Chittagong Association were some of the distinguished persons who were present on this occasion. The products of the cottage industry and handicrafts were most important among the exhibits. There was arrangement of magic show, singing and dancing which gave much pleasure to the visitors.<sup>59</sup>

The exhibitions were arranged under the auspices of the corporate bodies and government patronage. At these

exhibitions manufacturers and traders displayed their works of art and agricultural products to stimulate sales. Animal health and plant health were also included as important items of exhibits. These exhibitions and fairs played an important role as meeting places for buyers and sellers and undoubtedly encouraged the agriculturists and manufacturers to produce quality products.

### Road Transport.

During the British rule the road communication improved considerably. The control of road traffic in the middle of the nineteenth century was entrusted to the public works department and in the later part of the nineteenth century it was entrusted to the District Board which performed its functions under the road transport service of the provincial government. There were three major roads which connected all the towns and important places of the district.

1. Chittagong Dhaka Trunk Road. According to the 'Annual General Reports' for 1871-72 and 1872-73, prepared by Mr H Hankey, the "only imperial road in the district under the superintendence of the Public works Department" was the Chittagong Dhaka Great Trunk Road, which runs for a distance of 46 miles through the district.<sup>60</sup>

The road was originally a military road. H J S Cotton writes, "The military halting places on this road were at Boorbooreah on the Fenny River, at Meer Ka Sarai, at Sitakund and at Kuddum Rusool, about a mile north of Chittagong."<sup>61</sup>

Regarding the condition of the Chittagong portion of the Dhaka Chittagong Trunk Road Mr C Fryer, collector of Chittagong writes in 1794, "... It is in very tolerable condition during the dry season....In the rainy season, it is frequently impassable from innumerable water courses which descend from the hills."<sup>62</sup> In subsequent period many of the streamlets were bridged in order to improve the communication between places.

**2. Chittagong Arakan Road.** The Arakan Road originated from an old military line connecting Chittagong town with the southern part of the district. During the Mughal period the southern part of this road was abandoned. Mr Braigham, "a young officer of the second battalion of sepoy's stationed at Ramoo", in his letter dated 28th December, 1794 to the Governor General put forward a plan for the reconstruction of the deserted road.<sup>63</sup>

The Arakan Road was not repaired till the first Burmese war.<sup>64</sup> "The places of encampment of troops were Collagaon, Fakeer Ka Haut on the banks of the Sangoo, Company Ka Haut (near Satkania), Chunnaatee, Chuckerea, and Edgong."<sup>65</sup>

A scheme known as the Arakan Road Development scheme in order to improve the Arakan Road was undertaken by the government. It sanctioned in 1928-29 a sum of Rs five lack to materialise the plan. The minister in reply to Mr Nur Ahmad's enquiry about the progress of the work informed the Hon'ble member that the work had lately been undertaken and was in progress (in the year 1939).<sup>66</sup>

The Anglo Japanese war in the early 1940s demanded the bricksoling of Chittagong-Cox's Bazar Road. The highway construction engineer supervised its construction and repair work.

**3. Chittagong-Ramgarh Road.** This road existing during the sultanate period still retains its importance as the chief communicating line between Chittagong town and the farthest part of north Chittagong. Till 1930 only twelve miles from Chittagong town to Hathazari was metalled and opened for wheeled traffic.<sup>67</sup>

**Public Roads.** W W Hunter mentions some minor roads which serve as passages from place to place. These are Robertganj Road, Mahajan Hat Road, Tippera Pass Road, Halishahar Road, Nasirabad Road, Bakalia Road, Kalurghat Road, Cox's Bazar-Ramu Link Road, Chittagong-Chandpur Ghat Road,

Anwara Road, Paraikora Road, Sakirapol Road, Dhalghat Road, Maheshkhali Road, Phenua Road, Kharana Road, Rangunia Road, Mandarbari Road, Mitasarai Road.

Maulvi Nur Ahmad asked the government in the legislative council in 1941, "whether the Government propose to improve at least those roads which are of provincial importance such as Ramgarh Road, Arakan Road etc." The minister replied that from the Road Fund during the years from 1937-38 to 1940-41, a sum of Rs 8, 29, 716 was spent on road projects in Chittagong.<sup>69</sup>

**Road bridges.** A road bridge was generally made by either iron or timber beams and timber sleepers with timber foundations at either end. The construction and development of road bridges was undertaken on greater scale from the beginning of the 20th century. The construction of bridges was generally entrusted to civil engineers who designed structures and organized and supervised their construction.

In reply to a question asked by Maulvi Nur Ahmad the minister informed him that, "government are prepared to spend Rs 73,000 for the construction of the Sarta Bridge."<sup>70</sup>

**Dhalas or mountain passes.** Narrow passage through mountains, in Chittagong dialect is called dhala. During the Mughal and the early British periods there were eleven dhalas in Chittagong. Tolls were collected from those who used them. These were Phatikchhari Dhala, Andharmanik Dhala, Bogpur Dhala, Haralchhari Dhala, Udaliya Dhala, Karnal Dhala, Dodonia Dhala, Sagarkuttora Dhala, Bara Kumira Dhala, Chhota Kumira Dhala and Pohangiya Dhala.

**Sarais or rest houses.** Public houses for lodging of travellers known as sarais or rest houses had been in existence since the Mughal period. An innkeeper was appointed in each of the sarais to attend the wayfarers. He also supplied necessary information regarding tours. The employees in cases of the better kind of sarais or bungalows receive guest travellers and made arrangements of accommodation and food for the

travellers. Buchanan Hamilton (1798) refers to a number of sarais along Dhaka Chittagong Road.

Road tax (rahdari) was in existence from ancient times. Road tax was collected even from the wood cutters who carried bundles of bamboos or firewood through mountain passes.

**Water ways-inland.** Down to the end of the 19th century rivers and canals were the chief means of communication. W W Hunter writes that, "there is hardly a single village which has not this means of communication with other parts of the district." Referring to the report of the collector of Chittagong, Hunter writes "...most of the villages possess water communication and nearly every inhabitant of the district....live more or less by river traffic."<sup>72</sup> Country made rowing boats were employed to carry passengers as well as merchandise.

The Karnaphuli provided chief means of water communication. The water course between Sadarghat and Rangamati was the most important waterway in the district. Other rivers wide and deep enough for boats to sail on are the Halda and the Sankha.

Some of the canals are sufficiently deep and wide to provide vessels for plying between places. These are Boalkhali, Chandkhali, Banskhali, Julqadar. Buchanan Hamilton while visiting Chittagong in 1798 travelled through the link canal between the Karnaphuli and the Sankha (Julqadar Canal)<sup>73</sup>

**Ghats and ferries.** Ferry boats were engaged in carrying people and goods across a river or a canal. Sadarghat, Patharghata and Ante Mohammad's Ghat were the three principal ghats or landing places as well as ferrighats on the river bank of the town. Buchanan Hamilton mentions Patharghata as the chief landing and ferry ghat of the town.<sup>74</sup>

W W Hunter mentions some crowded inland ferryghats in the middle of the 19th century. These are Nazirhat Ghat on the Halda, Sharta Ghat on the Sharta, Sandwip Ghat on the Sandwip

Channel, Kalurghat on the Karnafuli, Bakaliya Ghat on the Karnafuli, Ante Mohammad Ghat and Patharghata on the Karnafuli, Dirghamaniya Ghat on the Murari Channel, Chandkhali Ghat on the Chandkhali, Dohazari Ghat on the Sankha, Fakir Muhammad's Ghat on the Sankha, Chandpur Ghat on the Sankha (Buchanan Hamilton crossed the river on this point) Matamuhuri Ghat on the Matamuhuri, Maheshkhali Ghat (Gorakh ghata) on the Maheshkhali channel, Sakir Muhammad's Ghat on the Rakhali, Bak Khali Ghat on the Bak Khali, Raju Ghat on the Raju River.<sup>75</sup>

Tolls were collected from the users of the ferry ghats.

In the long coastal areas of the district, flood tide flow into estuaries and creeks which thus during that time became navigable by country boats.

The inland waterways were not only the chief means of passenger traffic but also the principal passages of trade in commodities such as foodgrains, cotton, earthenwares, salt, dried fish and bamboos.<sup>76</sup>

**Water transport - Coastal.** Chittagong port was frequented by coastal vessels from other coastal provinces of the subcontinent.<sup>77</sup> Coastal vessels were employed in passenger traffic and coastal trade between the main coast and the off shore islands such as Mahesh khali, Sandwip, Hatia etc.

The passenger traffic between Burma and India were monopolised by two British shipping companies named Asiatic Steam Navigation Company and British India Steam Navigation Company. During the Swadeshi movement period, a group of Chittagong merchants started passenger traffic between Chittagong and Burma.

**Rail road.** The railway line which connected Chittagong with the rest of the country was constructed under the supervision of Assam Bengal Railway. it was opened for passenger traffic in 1895. Chittagong was selected as the headquarters of the Assam Bengal Railway.

In the early part of the 1920s the construction of the Chittagong Nazirhat branch line and Chittagong Dohazari branch line were completed. The Kalurghat Railway Bridge was designed and constructed by Martin Burn Co. in 1929 at an estimated cost of Rs 18 lack 74 thousand.<sup>78</sup> The Assam Bengal Railway controlled the passenger, postal mail and cargo services down to the end of the British rule.

**Air way.** Government decided to build an airport in Chittagong as early as the latter part of 1920s. According to the Administrative Report, "acquisition of land for and preparation of a landing ground at Chittagong was in progress."<sup>79</sup>

Aircraft with seating arrangements for 12 to 15 persons could land at and took off the airport during the Second World War period. Vickers Viscount was the first propeller turbine (turbo-prop) civil aircraft which used the acrodrome. Later on the airport provided services for the Dakota type of aircraft.

**Postal service.** Mr H J S Cotton gives the following information about the early days of the Postal Service in Chittagong.

From the earliest occupation of the English, postal communication was of course maintained with Calcutta. .... There seems to have been no regularity in despatch and letters were sent by special messengers.... There are occasional records in the proceedings, such as on the 15th June 1769, that the dawk had been plundered by dacoits, or more frequently that the dawk boat had been lost in crossing the Megna. .... In 1776 a high power "Dawk committee was formed.... It 1777 the chief himself was appointed Deputy Post Master of Chittagong.

A daily postal communication was established in 1794 .... Letters then arrived at Chittagong in six days from Calcutta.<sup>80</sup>

The Post Master of General Post Office controlled the local post offices. In 1914 the construction of General Post Office building was started.<sup>81</sup>

The post First World War period witnessed the

technological developments in telecommunications system. "Telegraph line from Dhaka to Chittagong was completed about the end of 1859."<sup>82</sup> Since then all the thana sadars and important places of Chittagong have been connected with telegraphic wires. Number of post and telegraph offices towards the end of the British rule were as follows :

1921, P.O. - 113, T.O. - 28

1931, P.O. - 134, T.O. - 38<sup>83</sup>

The telegram system was introduced in the early 1920s.

The telephone service was introduced in early 1920s. The telephone office operates mechanical devices dealing with local calls especially in the urban areas.

An organized body of the employees of Post and Railway Mail Service (RMS) called Post and RMS Association was founded in the early 1920s. The meetings of the Association were being held annually since its establishment. On July 24, 1938 the annual meeting of the Association was held at the Graduate School. The Association also organized cultural functions at regular interval.<sup>84</sup>

**Banking and Insurance.** The increase of circulation of money brought banking system into existence. Before the introduction of modern banking system professional moneylenders supplied rural credit. Poet Nabin Chandra Sen writes in his autobiography that a branch of the Bank of Bengal (est. 1840) was established in Chittagong sometime in the 1870s.<sup>85</sup> Nothing is known about the business activities of this bank.

During the nineteen thirties a number of commercial banks opened their branch offices for business purposes in Chittagong. Some of these were Wallace Bank Ltd., Chartered Bank Ltd., Lloyds Bank Ltd., National Overseas and Grindlays Bank Ltd., Bank of China, Mercantile Bank of India, Bank of Asia Ltd. etc.

Besides the foreign banks, a large number of indigenous

banks grew up in Chittagong. Most of these banks were privately owned and operated. Their business was concerned chiefly with acceptance of deposits and lending of money. Some of these banks were Registered Banking and Trading Co. Ltd., Tripura Modern Bank, People's Bank, Pioneer Bank, Sound Bank of India, Chittagong Traders Co-operative Bank Ltd., Deshapriya Bank Ltd., The Chittagong Commercial Bank Ltd., The Comrade Bank Ltd., Chittagong Union Bank Ltd., Chittagong Central Banking Corporation Ltd., Bharat Kalyan Bank Ltd., Mahalaksmi Bank Ltd., Chittagong Loan Co. Ltd., Indo-Burma Trader Bank Ltd., Presidency Bank Ltd., Eastern Union Bank Ltd., Merchants Bank Ltd., New Bank Ltd., Prabartak Bank Ltd., Sattar and Sons Ltd., Jubilee Bank Ltd.,

Unfortunately, the management of the local banks was not satisfactory. The overdraft system permitted a depositor to overdraw more money than he had in the bank. The government version regarding the causes of the collapsing of banks is as follows. ".... Mismanagement by the members, default of payment, surreptitious transfer of property to avoid payment, and overfinancing of the members are the principal causes..."<sup>86</sup> Most of the locally managed banks have gone into liquidation in the late nineteen forties.

The co-operative banking system under government supervision came into being as early as the beginning of the 20th century. The chief purpose of the co-operative banking system was to provide loan for the rural people on low interest. A large portion of the funds of the cooperative banks came from government sources. In almost every advanced village co-operative bank was established. Co-operative banks greatly reduced the dependence on the professional money lenders.

Postal savings give the people very good service. Postal savings collect deposits but do not lend money. People invest money in the postal savings and the post office repay the money to the depositor with interest.

Where the indigenous banks failed, co-operative banks

and postal savings did commendable service. This is due to government regulation on the functions of these two organizations.

An insurance is an agreement (commonly called a policy) between the insured who pays a premium and the insurer who in return promises to compensate the insured if he suffers death or specified losses through fire, accidents etc. Among the various types of insurance life insurance was the more common form of insurance.

During the British period insurance companies were mainly private enterprises. The business activities of the insurance companies were generally sponsored by banks and capitalist individuals. Some of the insurance companies of Chittagong may be mentioned. United Common Insurance, Bharateswari Banking and Insurance, Aryasthan Insurance. Besides, the following insurance companies had their branches or agencies in Chittagong. Empire of India Life Assurance, Eastern Federal Union Insurance, New India Assurance, Co. Ltd., New Asiatic Insurance etc.<sup>87</sup>

Bad practices developed in the management of business affairs of the indigenous insurance companies. Dividends were declared that had not been earned; victim's claims were not paid back. Several insurance companies wound up their business within a short period of their establishment.

Banks and insurance companies were very badly affected by the Second World War.

### Chambers of Commerce

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce. In 1906, Chittagong Chamber of Commerce was established. From that time down to 1947 it was the most important trade organization in Chittagong. It was a voluntary association of independent farms in industry, commerce and trade to protect and promote their common local interests.

The functions of the Chamber were conducted by a Board of Commissioners which was constituted as follows :

3 members appointed by the central government

1 member appointed by Indian Merchants Association

2 ex-officio members

1 member appointed by Bengal Assam Railway authorities

3 members appointed by Chittagong Chamber of Commerce

1 member appointed by Indian (? Chittagong) Merchants Association

1 member appointed by Muslim Chamber of Commerce

Total 12 members<sup>88</sup>

In 1936 the president and the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce were Mr T M Brodic and Mr F E Bell respectively. In 1937 the newly appointed president was Mr S A Oliver.<sup>89</sup>

**Chittagong Merchants Association.** It was an association of tradesmen, businessmen and manufacturers for the protection of their interests. it was established in 1930. Its president was Rai Upendra Lal Rai Bahadur (1930-36) who was also a member of the Chittagong Port Trust.<sup>90</sup>

**Muslim Chamber of Commerce.** Its chief objective was the development of business opportunities and to help the Muslim businessmen in their business matters. Its president was Haji Nazu Mia Sowdagar and its secretary was Mr M N Islam (1936). A Board of Commissioners was formed to conduct its affairs.

### Chittagong Port

Chittagong port is the principal passage way of Bangladesh. The navigability of the river and the depth of the sea lend it a unique position in the map of Bengal. The Portuguese called it Porto Grande or great port (1538). The 'Ain i Akbari' praises its commercial worth. While expressing warm approbation of the port of Chittagong, Hunter writes, "the peculiar advantages which Chittagong possessed enabled it to command in early

times almost the entire trade in Bengal.”<sup>91</sup> Since 1860s, “Chittagong has been rapidly becoming a great centre of commerce, and the port is one of the best in India.”<sup>92</sup>

The limits of the port of Chittagong, as defined by a government notification dated 12th September, 1856 are as follows : To the north east, a line drawn across the river Karnafuli from boundary pillar at the mouth of the Chaktai creek to the boundary pillar on the opposite bank of the said river, to the south west a line drawn across the said river from the boundary pillar at the mouth of the Goaldanga creek to the boundary pillar on the opposite bank, at the northern most point of Lakhia Char....<sup>93</sup>

The territorial jurisdiction of the port at the time of the termination of British rule comprised Chaktai, Sadarghat, Patenga, Lakhya Char, Jaldia, and Kutubdia.<sup>94</sup>

National highways, overseas trade, existence of a good harbour and railway communication increased the rate of growth of Chittagong port in the early part of the twentieth century.

**Port Trust.** The administration of the port of Chittagong was run by the Chittagong Port Trust, created by the Act of 1887-88.<sup>95</sup> “The commissioner and district magistrate are respectively chairman and vice chairman of the Port Trust Commissioners.”<sup>96</sup>

The executive branch of the port administration in the beginning of the 20th century consisted of a port officer, a port engineer, a health officer, a government engineer and a shipwright surveyor.<sup>97</sup>

The original Port Trust Act of 1887 was amended successively in 1903 and 1912. The port of Chittagong was brought under the direct control of government in April, 1912.<sup>98</sup>

The original Act of 1887 was eventually replaced by the Chittagong Port Act in 1914.<sup>99</sup> The Chittagong Port Bill was enacted on the 28th February, 1914. “The object of the Act was

to make more suitable provisions for the management of the affairs of the Port of Chittagong in view of present day requirements.”<sup>100</sup>

The Chittagong Port (Amendment) Act, 1918 was “enacted for the purpose of improving the financial position of the port of Chittagong.” In the same year Sir George Buchanan submitted to the government of India (Railway Department) his valuable report on the development of Chittagong port.<sup>102</sup>

In 1924-25 the government of Bengal asked the Indian government to sanction a loan of Rs 50 lacs for the development of the port.<sup>103</sup>

In August, 1927 the Lt. Governor of Bengal visited Chittagong. He assured the people that the Indian government was fully aware of the importance of the port of Chittagong.<sup>104</sup>

By the Chittagong Port (Ahmendment) Act, 1928 the Port of Chittagong was declared a major port. The formal announcement was given effect on the 1st April, 1928. From that date, the Chittagong Port Trust came under the direct administrative control of the government of India.<sup>105</sup>

The administration of the Port of Chittagong was entrusted to the Board of Commissioners which was constituted in 1945-46 as follows :

3 members appointed by the central government (belonging to three categories)

2 members elected by the Indian Merchants Association (belonging to two categories)

2 ex-officio members

1 member appointed by the Assam Bengal Railway authorities

3 members elected by the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce

1 member elected by the Muslim Chamber of Commerce of Chittagong.

Total : 12 members<sup>106</sup>

Towards the close of the British rule the senior officers employed at the management of the port were deputy conservator, port engineer, secretary, harbour master.<sup>107</sup>

The establishment of Assam Bengal Railway headquarters in Chittagong greatly increased the importance of Chittagong port. The link line connecting the port with the main line serves to carry imported goods to distant places of the subcontinent.

**Jetties.** Jetties are indispensable for a port. In earlier times, woodwork jetties were constructed to protect the ships from cyclone and tidal bore and to help loading and unloading of cargoes. Four jetties were built between 1898 and 1910.

**Light houses.** A tower shaped building equipped with powerful light was constructed in the island of Kutubdia to give signal to the navigation of ships in the port area. It was constructed by General Lighthouse, Government of India in the 19th century. A lighthouse keeper was appointed to operate the lighting and signalling. During his visit to the island, poet Nabin Chandra Sen saw this lighthouse in functioning order.

Besides the Kutubdia Lighthouse, there were two other lighthouses on the seashore for warning or guiding ships at sea. One was Norman's Point Lighthouse and the other one was Patenga Beacon. The latter one started its function on October 14, 1945.

**Survey.** Surveying of river bed with the objective of safe navigation started immediately after the acquisition of the Diwani. A body of government officials were appointed to examine the condition of the river bed. They were asked to submit a report on the results of the investigation. Since then the mouth of the river Karnafuli is regularly being surveyed. Extensive survey work was undertaken in April, 1942.<sup>108</sup>

**Dredging.** Constant dredging was required for removing silting on the river bed and in checking shoaling on

the bars as well as in the port itself.<sup>109</sup> The government report mentions at least two dredging ships which were in operation in the river mouth. The dredger Karnafuli was at work in 1911-12.<sup>110</sup> The dredger Patenga started work on January 3, 1942.<sup>111</sup>

### Trade-inland and overseas.

Trade activities in the rural areas were carried on through hats, bazars and ganj's located usually in places of suitable communication. The early British sources refer to some places of business from which tolls were collected. These were Hat Mirganj, Hat Ramram, Hat Abhairam, Hat Pukuria, Hat Kutubganj. Buchanan Hamilton (1798) passed through some markets while travelling across the district. These were Company's Hat (established by the East India Company, (p. 25), Kaungla pru's Hat (the royal hat of the Marma chief), Doodusty Khan's Hat (the chief place in Chakaria), Fakir Hat (situated on the bank of a salt water creek named Gooroo batta), Chunati Hat, Budhpura Hat (p. 100), Rajaganj (p. 101) and Fakir Hat (near the mouth of the Ichamati). In the middle of the 19th century, Mahajan's Hat, Nazir Hat, Hat e Hazari and Roaza Hat were the chief seats of trade.

Referring to the internal river borne trade in Chittagong, Hunter writes, "grain, cotton, coarse cloth, earthen pottery, fire wood, dried fish and bamboos form the principal articles of the river borne trade...."<sup>112</sup>

W W Hunter writes that the Ganges - Brahmaputra - Meghna river system "gave ready communication with all the country traversed by these rivers."<sup>113</sup> Native boats from different river ports of Bengal regularly plied to Chittagong for exchange of commodities. Referring to the inter district trade by water, Hunter writes, "The country built vessels trade from Chittagong to Narayanganj with earth oil, salt, cotton, betel nut and other articles bringing back tobacco, jute, hemp, ghi, sugar, oil seeds, and other country produce..."<sup>114</sup>

There was a regular course of trade between Chittagong and Burma. Rice was imported from Burma into Chittagong.

"The export trade to Akyab consisted in turmeric, onions, garlicks, mustard seed, hemp and jute rope."<sup>115</sup> Trade between Chittagong and Burma was monopolised by a group of merchants of Chittagong. Merchants of high level like Abdul Bari Chowdhury, Jnanendra Lal Chowdhury and Abdul Gani Chowdhury became millionaire by trading with Burma.

Referring to the coastal trade Hunter writes, 'cocoanuts, shells and sundries are brought in country bottoms from Ceylon, Maldives and Laccadives."<sup>116</sup>

The British sources give some information about the overseas trade. According to Walter Hamilton the principal items of export trade from Chittagong were wood planks, coarse cloth and bamboo built umbrellas.<sup>117</sup> The fur of beaver was another important item of export.<sup>118</sup>

In the middle of the 19th century sailing ships were replaced by steam ships. According to Hunter's 'Account', in 1860-61, 37 ships of foreign countries entered the port and 47 foreign ships left the port.<sup>119</sup> Since that time, according to the 'Accounts' of Hunter, "there has been a steady increase in the tonnage of the vessels frequenting the port."<sup>120</sup>

The acquisition of Diwani gave the English, an opportunity to establish complete control of trade particularly in salt, betelnut and tobacco.<sup>121</sup>

The British trading companies which had business affairs at Chittagong through their branches or agencies were as follows : Mssrs Bullock Brothers, Mssrs James Finlay & Co. Ltd, Mssrs Ralli Brothers Ltd., Mssrs Mc Nail & Kilburn Ltd., Mssrs Grahams Trading & Co. Balmer Lawrie & Co. Bird & Co. Duncan Brothers, Grindlays Arbuthnot, Gladstone Wyllie, James Warren & Co. Ltd., Mackinon Mackenjie & Co., Steel Brothers & Co., Turner Morrison & Co., Volkart Brothers, Spencer & Co. All these trading companies supplied foreign investment.

**Customs.** The customs is a government department that collects taxes on imported goods. Customs duties were named sayer duties during the Mughal and the early British periods.

"Sayer duties were collected from goods passing the ghats or ferries....The collector of revenue was ex-officio collector of customs."<sup>122</sup>

The administration of the customs department in the beginning of the 20th century was "carried on by the Commissioner of the Division who is chief customs officer for the Port of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar; he is assisted at Chittagong by an assistant collector of customs and at Nhila by a superintendent of customs."<sup>123</sup>

**Money.** Money is the medium of exchange that is widely accepted in payment for goods. Money is circulated in two forms, coin and paper note. Coins during the British period were divided into three units, taka, anna, pie. Paper money gained wider circulation in the early parts of the 20th century.

W W Hunter writes that in the 1870s, money was "plentiful in the district." He further writes that "surplus money is usually invested in land."<sup>124</sup> With the growth of banking system money became a vital part in the economic activities of the country.

**Price.** Price is the value of commodities expressed in terms of money. In the rural areas price of commodities was determined by negotiation between buyer and seller. Regulation of prices by the government was absent.

Wartime condition lead to the higher prices of commodities which in its turn lead to an increase in the volume of money relative to the availability of goods. The rise in the price level is generally known as inflation. This inflation was one of the causes of '43 famine.

In former days, supply of money was very much insufficient for the need especially in the rural areas. The practice of carrying on trade by barter system continued until the first quarter of the 20th century. Barter means the direct exchange of goods for other goods, without the use of money as a medium of exchange. In fact, barter system was the nerve of rural trade.

Dalal or broker played an important role in the transaction of goods. A dalal acted as an intermediary between a buyer and a seller for a fee or commission. During East India Company's rule, agents also known as dalals, were professionally engaged in business transaction.

**Taxation.** The taxation policy of government was neither rational nor beneficial especially to the cultivators and domestic producers. Taxes imposed by the government on some items of agricultural products, forest products, marine products etc. caused much distress of the common people who lived by these means. In the later half of the 1930s people expressed discontentment against a number of unjust taxes that had to be paid by them.<sup>125</sup>

**Economic condition of the people.** W W Hunter gives a bright picture of the economic condition of the peasantry. "The peasantry are seldom in debt, and are very independent, many of them add to their income derived from agriculture by working as labourers, boatmen, petty traders, & C."<sup>126</sup>

The narration of Hunter is, however, not based on correct observation. The greater portion of the peasantry was living under severe strain of poverty. Their income was too low to buy the basic things such as food and clothing in necessary quantity. Over 95 per cent of the district's population lived in rural areas and over 80 percent of rural population were virtually landless. The cultivators had to sell their produced crops less than productive costs. Most of the poor people borrowed money from the village moneylenders with exorbitant rate of interest.

The poverty situation further deteriorated as a result of natural calamities. The humble houses made of bamboo and wild grass could not withstand such natural calamities as floods and cyclones. The people had no means to repair their damaged dwellings immediately and they had to suffer from

exposure until repair.

Economic condition can never be good one under colonial rule. Poverty, disease, malnutrition, illiteracy, unawareness of personal hygiene dominated the lives of the common people in both rural and backward parts of the urban areas. The two world wars made the condition of the common people worse.

#### Note :

- 1 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 161
- 2 *Census Report*, 1931
- 3 *Buchanan*, p. 26
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 15
- 5 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 159
- 6 *Buchanan*, p. 16
- 7 The *Panchajanya*, 1342, p. 191; Hunter *op. cit.*, p. 208
- 8 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 208
- 9 RAB, 1911-12, p. 37
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 23
- 11 The *Panchajanya*, Aut. Sp. 1936
- 12 *Buchanan*, p. 22
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 23
- 14 C D G, p. 7
- 15 *Memorandum*, p. 188
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 187
- 17 *Buchanan*, p. 26
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 46
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 46
- 20 *Buckland*, I, 314
- 21 *Hobson Jobson*
- 22 *Hamilton's Hindustan*, I, 169
- 23 *Memorandum*, p. 18
- 24 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 129
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 *Buchanan*, p. 50
- 27 *Memorandum*, p. 20

28 *Ibid.*, p. 28

29 *Hamilton's Hindustan*

30 *Buckland*, I, 287

31 *The Administration of the Lower Provinces of Bengal during Lt. Governorship of Sir John Woodburn*, Calcutta, 1903, p. 37

32 *RAB*, 1917-18, p. 77

33 *Ibid.*, 1922-23, p. 106

34 *Ibid.*, 1917-18, p. 100

35 *ORBLC*, 1940, p. 964

36 *Hobson Jobson*, p. 336

37 *RAB*, 1922-23, p. 74

38 *Hunter, op. cit.*, p. 132

39 *RAB*, 1922-23, p. 77

40 *Hunter, op. cit.* p. 187

41 *Buchanan*, p. 38

42 *RAB*, 1922-23, p. 77

43 *Hunter, op. cit.*, p. 132

44 *Memorandum*, p. 23

45 *Hunter, op. cit.*, p. 187

46 *Ibid.; RAB*, 1911-12, p. 37

47 *RAB*, 1914-15, p. 68

48 *ORBLC*, 1941, p. 247

49 *RAB*, 1922-23, p. 76

50 *ORBLC*, 1939, p. 9

51 *RAB*, 1914-15, p. 68

52 *Ibid.*

53 *ORBLC*, 1934, p. 24

54 *The Deshapriya*, August 2, 1938, p. 22

55 *Hamilton's Hindustan*, I, 169

56 Qt. *Hunter, op. cit.*, p. 191

57 *Hunter, op.cit.*, p. 192

58 *ORBLC*, 1940, p. 609

59 *The Deshapriya*, 1939

60 *Hunter, op. cit.*, p. 186-87

61 *Memorandum*, p. 205

62 Qt. *Ibid.*

63 *Memorandum*, pp. 205-206

64 *Ibid.*, p. 206

65 *Ibid.*

66 *ORBLC*, 1939, p. 73

67 *C D G, B Vol.* 1921-31, p. 23

68 Hunter, *op. cit.*, 186-87

69 *ORBLC*, 1941, pp 40-41

70 *Ibid.*, p. 41

71 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 127

72 *Ibid.*, p. 129

73 *Buchanan*, p. 23

74 *Ibid.*

75 Hunter, *op.cit.*, p. 128

76 *Ibid.*, p. 129

77 *Ibid.*, p. 191

78 The *Bangla Gazette*, 1929

79 *RAB*, 1930-31, p. 120

80 *Memorandum*, pp. 213-215

81 *RAB*. 1914-15, p. 78

82 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 223

83 *Census Report*, 1931

84 The *Anjali*, 1938

85 *Amar jiban*, poet's autobiography, vol. I, Pt. 2, p. 470

86 *ORBLC*, 1940, p. 957

87 The *Panchajanya*, Aut. Sp., 1936

88 The *Panchajanya*, Aut. Sp., 1936

89 The *Satyabarta*, 1344

90 The *Panchajanya*, Aut. Sp. 1936

91 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 191

92 *Ibid.*

93 *Ibid.*, pp. 192-93

94 *Administration Report on the port of Chittagong*, 1945-46

95 O'Malley, *op.cit.*

96 *Ibid.*

97 *Ibid.*

98 *RAB*, 1911-12, p. 203

99 *Ibid.*, 1914-15, p. 58

100 *Ibid.*, 1913-14, pp. 13-14

101 *Ibid.*, 1918-19, p. 58

102 *Ibid.*, p. 61

103 *Ibid.*, 1924-25, p. 58

104 *Ibid.*, 1926-27, p. 143

105 *Ibid.*, 1927-28, p. 143

106 *ARPC*, 1945-46

107 *Ibid.*

108 *Ibid.*

109 *RAB*, 1911-12, p. 203

110 *Ibid.*

111 *ARPC*, 1945-46

112 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 129

113 *Ibid.*, p. 191

114 *Ibid.*, p. 190

115 *Ibid.*

116 *Ibid.*

117 *Hamiltons Hindustan*, I, 169

118 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 132

119 *Ibid.*, p. 191

120 *Ibid.*

121 *Firminger*, I, 37

122 *Memorandum*, pp. 19-20

123 O'Malley, *op.cit*

124 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 207

125 *The Deshapriya*, 1938

126 Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 162

## Chapter 17

### Social Change

Society during the latter part of the British period experienced fundamental changes in the social order which was quite different from the beliefs, customs and the way of life of the people of previous period. This change was not abrupt but a gradual process, which continued for decades.

The process of becoming westernized in thoughts and language ushered a change in the social order. As early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, English language has found favour with the people of Chittagong. Ramkinu Dutta (1801-1894) was one of the earliest persons who was able to speak English fluently with the English officers. He not only could write English in amusing way but also could compose poems in English. Krishna Chandra Chowdhury (1844-1894) was the first English knowing person in the Buddhist society. He had great influence in the contemporary Buddhist society. The highly English educated persons such as S. Nader Ali (1854-1930) Abdus Satter, Shaikh Rafiuddin Siddiqi played important role in the process of social change of the Muslim society as early as the nineteenth century.

The spread of English education and the establishment of English educational institutions in growing number everywhere in the district brought about a western educated society which worked to adapt to modern society.

Both the government and the humanitarians were very much keen to establish educational institutions particularly higher English institutions. In the later part of the nineteenth century government provided help for the implementation of free compulsory primary education.

University helped the growth of English educated elite among the Muslim community.

Contact with European cultures, study of European ideology undoubtedly helped the liberalization of religious and political beliefs. A number of educated people visited European countries to be acquainted themselves with European culture, education and method of living.

The ideas concerning human life and culture advocated by western philosophers of the nineteenth century were favourably responded to by the progressive section of the society. Western political philosophies such as Liberalism, Utilitarianism, Humanism not only became familiar to the newly created elite class of the society but also greatly influenced their ideology.

The second half of the nineteenth century is an important period of reforms in the social system. The Brahma Samaj movement in the Hindu society, the Deoband and Aligash movements in the Muslim society and the Buddhist reform movement under the leadership of Samgharaja brought drastic social changes to each of the communities.

The Brahmas were liberals in religious view and supported social reforms. They professed freedom from the bondage of social and religious prejudices, conducted campaign against orthodoxy and advocated for changes in the age old customs and beliefs.

The latter period of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century witnessed vigorous campaign against social abuses and female bondage. Dr. Annada Charan Khastagir and his Brahma associates acted as pioneers in war against social abuses.

The benevolent activities of the philanthropists imposed great value on the welfare of human being. The latter part of the nineteenth century witnessed anti-slavery movement throughout the British empire. Domestic slavery

which was common during the Mughal period, persisted down to the early British period. Mr. Goodwin the Collector of Chittagong submitted on the 1st September, 1774, a report on the system of slavery prevalent in Chittagong.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately government regulations abolished the practice of slavery.

Women of the progressive middle class society became conscious of their rights. Women leaders like Mrs Nellie Sengupta delivered speeches in political meetings. The progressive section of the womenfolk participated in the struggle for independence and courted arrest. Educated women entered into a professional career particularly teaching.

The establishment of hospitals and charitable dispensaries provided modern methods of medical care for the people. Medical officers were appointed to deal with public health and medical professionals who received the highest university degree provided western method of medical treatment for curing illness.

Application of scientific knowledge and technological progress in the method of production, transport and management of trade and commerce completely changed the life style of the society. Even the poor agriculturist tried to acquire knowledge in advanced type of cultivation and marketing of agricultural products.

The introduction of steamship, automobile, railway, airplane has revolutionized the transport system. Telegraph, telephone and other methods of communication brought welcome changes in the daily life of the people.

Establishment of banks and insurance companies brought a drastic change in the money market. These companies extended economic benefit to all sections of the society.

The emergence of middle class society during the later part of the British rule was an important feature of the social system. The educated middle class group took the leadership in almost every sphere of social system. The western edu-

tion and the changed social behaviour furnished the ability and the qualities of good leadership needed to lead the society. The transformation of leadership from the upperclass to the middleclass was an important aspect of new social system.

In the early part of the twentieth century a number of political parties came into being and the educated class of all societies took an active part in political organizations especially political parties. The ideologies of the party were expressed in the party meetings and in the publication of party bulletins.

Political activities were apparent in the election system which greatly helped the democratization of political behaviour of the people.

Newspapers and periodicals played a major role in influencing people's opinions. Newspapers supplied reports on national and international events to the readers. Newspapers made the people aware of important social and political issues. Periodicals published useful and interesting articles which encouraged liking for the composition of literary works.

Freedom spirit engendered freedom movement. Even the common people participated in the successive stages of the Independence movement which brought a fundamental change in the attitude of the people towards government.

The spread of communism and socialism brought an important change to the political ideas of the people. The revolutionary literature published in large number developed political thinking among the masses.

The transformation of society is evident in social behaviour, dress and manners, political and economic activities.

The government service holder and the intelligentsia preferred European dress. Upperclass male folk began to wear coat stiffened with button.

The latter half of the 19th century and the first half of the twentieth century witnessed religious toleration and mutual

appreciation of different religious groups. Enlightened section of one society showed respect to other people's religious views and opinions.

Membership in the Chittagong Theosophical Society, Chattagram Dharmamandali, Muslim Literary Society was open to all sects. The meetings were attended by all sections of society. This trend facilitated social harmony between religious groups.

The Brahmas constituted the largest number of membership of the Theosophical Society. A section of enlightened Muslims joined this society. Mohammad Abdul Monaem, one of the leading Muslim writers and journalists was an active member of this society. The title Sahitya Visharad was respectfully awarded to Maulvi Abdul Karim by Chattagram Dharmamandali for his great contribution to the restoration of Bengali puthis.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century different types of socio religious conferences and public meetings were held periodically or occasionally. Social problems were consulted in these gatherings and resolutions were adopted, many of which were related to the development of the existing society. Opinions expressed in these gatherings inspired the people to do works for the betterment of society. Literary conferences were organized to promote literary pursuits and intellectual growth.

The rapid urbanization of Chittagong city gave way to the modernization of social life. The contact with city life developed modern ways of living in the rural areas.

During the closing years of the British rule Chittagong definitely entered into modern system of social order.

#### **Note :**

1 *Memorandum*, p. 223

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## A MAP OF CHITTAGONG

International Boundary	...	...	—
District Boundary	...	...	- - -
Thana Boundary	...	...	- - - -
Roads & Highways	...	...	- - - - -
Railway	...	...	+++++

